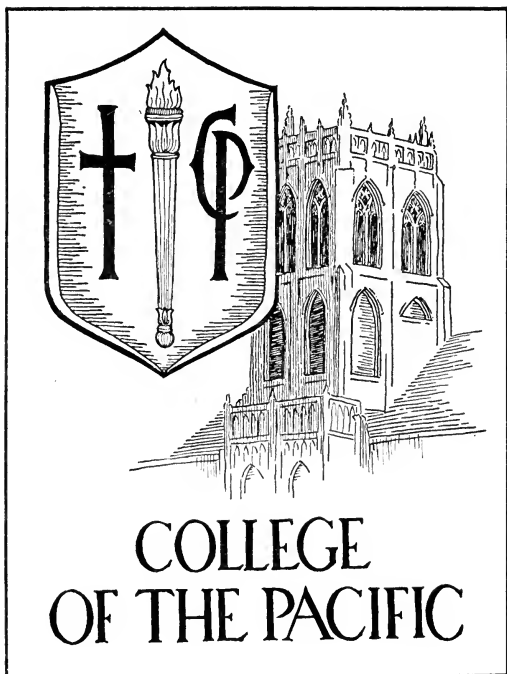


STORIES OF IRISH LIFE PAST AND PRESENT

SLIEVE FOY



JOHN WALLACE WILSON

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STORIES OF IRISH LIFE

AN UNNATURAL MOTHER.

By SLIEVE FOY.

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Also Colonial Edition.

A novel of exceptional interest in which the authoress displays remarkable power and skill, both in plot and characterisation. The theme is distinctly unusual—a selfish, designing woman of the world, whose daughter is, unconsciously, her hated rival—the daughter's honour compromised by her mother's machinations, a fascinating plot and love-story, with a remarkable *dénouement*. Slieve Foy had already a reputation in Irish literary circles, which has been considerably enhanced by this appeal to a wider circle of readers.

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Stories of Irish Life

Past and Present

BY
SLIEVE FOY

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PREFATORY NOTE

A few of these Stories have appeared in the pages of "The Weekly Freeman" and "The Irish Emerald"; the Author desires to acknowledge the courtesy of the Proprietors in kindly giving permission for them to be included in this volume.

THE LILY OF CARLINGFORD

AN OLD ROMANCE

CHAPTER I

ON a lovely evening in June, 1817, two horsemen, superbly mounted, were riding slowly along the road leading from Newry to the decayed but historic town of Carlingford, Co. Louth. These were officers attached to the cavalry regiment lately arrived in the "Old Citie of the Yews."

Colonel Viscount Addenbrook and his companion, Major Lord Adolph Bethol, were in the prime of early manhood and remarkably handsome. Though both possessed the splendid physique so common to the well-bred athletic Englishman, they belonged to different types of the race. Addenbrook was dark as the ideal Neapolitan; Major Bethol had the fair hair and blue eyes of northern latitudes.

These men had been college chums—companions-in-arms—had served in the Peninsula and fought at Waterloo—were of noble lineage, and as much distinguished for high principle as sincere attachment to each other—an attachment warranting intimates in dubbing them the modern Damon and Pythias.

Now that Peace had revisited the countries lately harrassed by Napoleonic warfare, these two brave soldiers were at liberty to rest on their laurels—for at least a breathing space.

The reins lay loosely on the horses' necks, as the riders scanned with interest the varied features of the lovely landscape through which they were passing.

Well does Carlingford Lough district deserve the admiration it never fails to win from lovers of beautiful scenery.

It is said the Lough derives its name from a tribe of Danes, called "Carlings," whom it reminded of the fiords of their native land. This arm of the sea stretches its blue length between two ranges of mountains.—On the County. Down side, those of Mourne raise their bald summits—never softened except by the mist-wreath, or the cloud shadows, that chequer with light and shade the beauty of their deep-toned colouring.

On their lower slopes white houses gleamed from among dense masses of foliage, while pasture, and cornlands, framed in dark hedgerows, lured the eye to rest with pleasure on their squares of agreeably contrasted colour.

The Louth mountains are more rugged, and approach the Bay more precipitously, but the cliffs are green, and at the time of which we write, were thickly dotted with trees, branching over the sparkling water that lapped the base of the rocks on which they grew.

As the officers came to that part of the road that lies at the foot of Slieve Foy, their attention was arrested by the exceeding beauty of two ladies, seemingly out for their evening stroll.

Both were tall, and erect as poplars. The carriage of the elder was regal; her expression at once noble and benignant; her skin like ivory, her lips carmine, dark almond-shaped eyes, with eyebrows and long lashes black as jet. A coronal of short, chestnut curls rested above her fair, intellectual forehead.

Her companion was in the first flush of girlhood, and lovely as a dream of the morning. Her hair was of a pale, golden hue confined in two long, dense plaits. Her large eyes, of violet blue, had eyebrows and curling lashes of golden brown; her face was a perfect oval—skin of lily-like fairness; the tint of the wild rose dyed her cheek, while her lips had the hue of a ripe red cherry. She had thrown a short scarlet cloak round her shoulders and drawn its silk hood partly over her head—altogether she made a vision of loveliness once seen never to be forgotten.

The elder lady cast one sweeping glance at the strangers, and then turned her head in another direction. The younger looked up, to find her eyes held by other eyes, dark and penetrating, only for a moment, yet in that moment an image was stamped on her mind, for weal or woe, not to be effaced.

The horsemen exchanged looks when they had passed the fair pedestrians, and turned in their saddles to gaze after them.

"By jove!" exclaimed Major Bethol, "there go a pair of stunners!"

"Juno and Venus come back to earth," replied the companion, "I hadn't thought such beauty existed."

"I'm positively spellbound! Do you take them for sisters?"

"I should say so.—Let us ask this man."

They reined in as a labourer approached.

"My man," said the Colonel, "can you tell me who are those ladies we have just passed?"

"Yer honour," he replied, "thim's Mrs. O'Neil an' her daughter, Miss Alice, be-named the 'Lily o' Carlingford' Mrs. O'Neil's the widda o' Docthor O'Neil, who died two years ago, Lord ha' marcy on his sowl. He was an all-out great man; an' his death's a tarrible loss. Tubbe sure his widda's a gran' lady intirely, an' does a hape fur the poor. There's har'ly a lyin'-in or a layin'-out but she gives a han'. I dunno what we'd do widout her."

"What do you mean by lying-in and laying-out?" queried Major Bethol.

"Yer honour, it's a way we hev o' spakin'. Whin a child is born we say its mother's lyin'-in, an' whin innny wan dies an's washed, we say they're laid-out, which manes they're ready fur the coffin."

"Would Mrs. O'Neil lay me out?"

"I cudn't tell that, yir honour. It's only among the poor she works; but I'm sartin sure you'd get plinty ti do that servise fur ye—ay, an' glad ti do it."

"What a delightful prospect," replied the young officer, laughing.

"Do the ladies walk at this hour every evening?" inquired Colonel Addenbrook.

"I can't say, yir honour; Miss Alice isn't long home from Dublin; but," he added, with an astuteness that did him credit, "I see her a'most ivry forenoon on the mountain. That's their house beyant."

Looking in the direction indicated, the gentlemen saw a long cottage, surmounted by three stacks of yellow chimneys, and overgrown with climbing roses and ivy. There was a sloping lawn in front, and the dwelling was approached by a broad gravel walk, bordered on both sides by hedgerows of fuschias—just then in full bloom.

The Colonel thanked his informant and handed him a guinea—a perquisite that nearly dumfounded the recipient,

who stretched out his open hand and asked, "Does yer honour mane goold?"

"All right, my man. Keep it," was the reply.

The officers turned to retrace their journey, and, after again passing the two ladies, urged their horses to a canter and were soon out of sight.

CHAPTER II.

"I think," said Mrs. O'Neil to her daughter, "those are officers from Newry."

"The horseman who rode next us has a noble face and beautiful, dark eyes," replied the young girl

"They are both handsome men, and I surmise the very two of whom the rector was speaking, on yesterday afternoon. He dined lately at Squire Hall's—a number of army men were present, and he was particularly charmed with a Colonel Ad-denbrook, only son of Earl Wilmington. He also spoke of another officer—Major Bethol, I think, son to the Marquis of Bradwin. There were ladies—among others, the Colonel's sister, who—the rector was told—is engaged, or likely to be, to her brother's friend—this Major Bethol."

"Is the Colonel married?"

"No, if I remember rightly, he's to marry his friend's sister."

"A nice family arrangement! I wonder if that handsome, dark man can be the Colonel?"

"I shouldn't be surprised; he answers the description given me."

The labourer to whom the strangers had been speaking now came up, his hand stretched out, palm upwards, and exclaimed excitedly: "He gimme that! The black-a-visaged gintleman gimme that goolden guinea! There's a hayro fur ye! I know'd this mornin' I'd ha' luck, fur the first thin' I met wus an ass——"

"Now, Paddy," said Mrs. O'Neil, "have sense. An ass has nothing to do with your good luck——"

"Oh, mamma," interrupted Alice, laughing, "you forget your Plutarch. Don't you remember how Caius Marius, when in dire distress, met an ass, and regarded his doing so as an

auspicious omen. 'Tis further stated this historical ass looked earnestly at the great Roman and then skipped! Paddy, how did the ass you met look?"

"Bedad, he jist looked like an ass"

"I mean, did it frolic or throw up its head in a saucy way?"

"Mebbe it did, miss, whin it passed me. I must say I didn't obsarve innny o' the commotions ye mintion. Mrs. O'Neil, ma'am, I hard since I wus that height," holding his hand about a foot above the ground—"it was sauncy to meet an ass, an' the revarse to see a magpie."

"Well, Paddy," replied Mrs. O'Neil, "it would be useless to try to convince you all such talk is nonsensical."

"It's ould talk at innny rate, ma'am—as ould as the hills, an if there's no thruth in the sayin', how comes it to ha' lasted to this?"

"Now, mamma, you're challenged."

Mrs. O'Neil, who couldn't help being amused, said, "At any rate, Paddy, I hope you'll turn this windfall to good account. Buy a heifer-calf. You can graze it on the 'commons' for next to nothing."

"Och, now, Mrs. O'Neil, avilish, wudn't it be the heighth o' maneness not to dhrink the gentleman's health in a glass o' the best?"

"I'm sure he would be much better pleased to know you had made good use of the money. Turn this unexpected gift to good account and it may be the beginning of your fortune."

"Faix, ma'am, an' there's sinse in what ye say."

"Paddy, about what were the gentlemen talking to you?" inquired the younger lady.

"They wur axin' who yis wur—an' lave it to me, Miss Alice, iv I didn't give yis a character ud take yi's to heaven. They jist rid aff thinkin' yis wur the worl's wondher for goodness. I towl thim how ye attinded the lyins-in an' the layins-out, an' wan o' thim ses to me, 'Wud Mrs. O'Neil lay me out?' 'I cudn't say, yer honour,' I answered; 'It's only among the poor she works,' sis I, 'but I'm sartin sure there's plinty 'ud be glad to do that sarvice fur ye.'"

"I didn't think, Paddy, you'd have given me away in that

manner; I see I'll never need a trumpeter so long as you're to the fore."

"Ye'll niver want wan to soun' yir praises to high an' low, rich an' poor, while the breath's in me body. May the light o' Heaven shine roun' ye iviry day ye live. Whin I was low in sickness an' want, it wus your white han' cooled me burnin' head, an' it wus your bounty fed us. I'd be a mane dog iv I cud forgit that, an' I'll take yir advice about the layin' out o' this money."

Having thus delivered himself, he moved on, and the ladies returned to their house.

CHAPTER III.

The entrance door of Foy Cottage opened on a small, square hall, tastefully furnished, and having a drawingroom and dining-room on either side. Above the door of the latter apartment a square of yellow satin, framed in carved wood, had the "Red Hand" of the O'Neil beautifully embroidered in its centre. The most noticeable object in the drawingroom was Mrs. O'Neil's harp.

This lady was the daughter of a successful Dublin barrister, and had moved in the best circles, at a period when society in the capital had attained its zenith of brilliancy—the period between Grattan's Parliament and the Union.

Gossip said, the gifted girl might have wed a title, had she not fallen hopelessly in love with a young doctor who visited at her father's house, and who was but scantily endowed with this world's wealth. However, his unblemished character and fine intellect weighed more in the estimation of a nature intrinsically noble than wealth or position; so the young beauty bestowed her hand and her dowry on him who had won her heart by true manliness and worth. Nor did she ever regret the step; her union was blest by as great an amount of happiness as ever fell to the lot of wedded mortals.

At the time of her marriage, there was an opening for a doctor in Carlingford, and the youthful pair were delighted to pitch their tent in an old-world place so famed for lovely scenery.

Alas! It is decreed poor human beings must pay a high price for any great earthly happiness. The more we love, the more terrible the wrench of that inevitable separation awaiting all. When Mrs. O'Neil stood by the dead form of her idolized husband and saw 'the light on that dear face was but the daylight only,' she felt as if she could not survive her loss. However, Time, the great healer, assuaged her grief, and her endeavours to lighten the sorrows of others proved the best means of alleviating her own.

On the particular evening with which we are concerned, Mrs. O'Neil, after laying aside her out-door things, sat down to her harp and sang to its accompaniment a number of Moore's Melodies—then much in vogue. Her daughter was delighted, knowing this to be the first time she had touched the instrument since her widowhood.

Next morning, when Alice had discharged the light household duties that fell to her share, she took her book and embroidery, and, following a sheep-track, reached a crag, among the heather—a favourite seat on which she passed many a happy hour.

She wore a light-blue cambric frock, and her lovely face appeared in perspective at the back of an overshadowing, white muslin sunbonnet.

This forenoon, neither book nor embroidery engaged her attention. Her hands lay idly in her lap, as her eyes rested on the blue bay and the violet-tinted Hills of Mourne—in her look no comprehension of their beauty: she inhaled the scent of purple heather, unconscious of its fragrance. The hare stirred among the bracken; now and again the grouse rose from their nests with a gentle whirr. The black and white wings of crows and seagulls intermingled,—as those birds joyfully careered above and around the face of the grim mountain; but the sights and sounds of nature were unheeded, as she mentally contemplated the handsome face seen on the previous evening, and wondered would she ever see that face again.

An hour had nearly passed, when Alice observed on the road beneath, three horsemen coming from Newry direction. Two dismounted, flung the reins to the third, and began to

ascend the mountain. Could it possibly be the strangers? Her first impulse was to fly; but they might not come near her at all—perhaps they only wished to obtain a better view of the locality. With trembling fingers she took up her embroidery, now and then glancing from out the depths of her protecting sun-bonnet. Plainly they were heading towards her and would soon reach where she sat.

They came, and halted in front of her - riding-caps in hand. She rose from her seat like a startled fawn.—It was Major Bethol who first spoke.

“Mademoiselle,” he said, “we are greatly charmed with the scenery about here, and would be glad to gain information on a few points.—Now, would you have the goodness to tell us what old ruin is that we see on the opposite side, near the entrance to the bay?”

There was a grave, respectful deference in the demeanour of the gentlemen that put Alice at ease, and caused her momentary embarrassment to vanish. She replied readily:

“That’s Greencastle—an old fortress built by the English; much oftener, I should say, in the hands of the Irish.”

“Thank you; and the surrounding district?”

“A portion of county Down.—In pre-Anglo-Saxon times all that territory belonged to an Irish chieftain named Magenís.”

“Indeed! Pray what mountain is it we see through the break in the nearer range?”

“Slieve Donard. It was on that mountain an O’Neil saved the lives of two foemen who had fallen into his power; he entertained them royally at his castle in Dundrum, and then sent them home under escort.”

“Very magnanimous! Are not those the Mourne Mountains?”

“They have been so called since the twelfth century. In much earlier times the cattle of the Kings of Ulster grazed on their slopes, and the mountains were then named after the herdsman in charge.”

“How interesting!” said Colonel Addenbrook, speaking for the first time. “We have done some exploring on the opposite side, and on ascending a mountain behind that pretty village, Rostrevor, came on a huge stone in so remarkable position

a push would seemingly cause it to topple down. Is that stone supposed to be a glacial deposit?"

"You mean Cloughmore!" exclaimed the young girl, with a flash of merriment. "According to tradition, Finn M'Coull flung that stone from the very mountain on which you stand, and which mountain, moreover, bears a resemblance in outline to that famous giant."

"Eh, what a colossal chap he must have been!" observed Major Bethol, looking for the resembling outline.

"Oh! the resemblance is only seen from a distance," said Alice.

"Ireland is a beautiful country," remarked Addenbrook.

"A beautiful country," repeated Alice; "but those who dwell in it are an oppressed people.—The British Government has abolished our Parliament."

"You had no Parliament till after the English invasion," observed the Colonel.

"We had a Parliament at Tara before the English were heard of in the world!—O'Connell will shatter the Union."

The officers smiled.

"You mean the Demagogue?" said the Colonel, a twinkle in his eye.

"I mean the Liberator!" she flashed.—"His name is music to my ear."

"It is possible to dislike music."

She turned towards him a questioning look—the very thing he wished—her eyes quickly fell beneath his ardent glance, and she coloured deeply.

"I see, young lady," he said, "you're a rebel."

"A rebel to bad laws, but loyal to those that are just."

"What may be your idea of justice?"

"Never to do to another what I shouldn't wish another to do to me; and to do to others as I'd wish to be done by."

"Pardon me," interposed Major Bethol, "isn't all this irrelevant? We're a long way from Finn M'Coull and scenery."

"There is rather a curious spot on this mountain," observed Alice, "locally called the Dane's Table. Would you wish to see it?"

"Very much, if you will have the goodness to show it us."

"Pray accompany us," said Addenbrook, and there was no mistaking the entreaty in his eyes and voice.

"No need, I must go indoors; that is my home," indicating the cottage by a movement of her head. "If you follow that sheep-track it will take you to the spot."

"Do you take us for sheep, Miss O'Neil?" queried Bethol, smiling.

"Indeed! I don't take you for anything so harmless," she replied, laughing. "On your return, mother would, I'm sure, be pleased to offer you luncheon—that is, if you would not disdain plain bread, goat's milk, and mountain honey."

"We accept your hospitable offer with much pleasure," they replied, and, bowing, turned to follow her directions to the "Dane's Table."

Alice bounded down the side of the mountain, to tell her mother what had passed. The officers weren't long about arriving at the cottage, and on noticing a harp in the drawing-room begged Alice for music.

"There's one song I should particularly like you to hear," she said, glancing merrily at her visitors, as she sat down to the harp, and sang with much spirit and expression, a rebel song of the period, in which the Sassenach came in for his own share—with a vengeance.

Her auditors, detecting the dash of mischievous fun in this selection, laughed heartily.

As the song ended, Mrs. O'Neil entered and greeted her guests with much grace. They adjourned to the diningroom, where, if the luncheon was simple, the table appointments were elegant. The hostess gave a highly amusing account of Paddy Bradley—the "hayro"—the guinea, and the ass.

"Are the people here very superstitious?" inquired the Major.

"They believe in banshees, leprechauns, and all kinds of fairies," said Alice.

"What do you suppose fairies to be?" inquired the Colonel.

"Denizens of the unseen world, that from time to time manifest themselves in our forts and under our hawthorn trees," she replied.

"Do you really believe in such?"

"Well, I keep an open mind on the subject. I rather like the idea of fays keeping out from among the bushes."

"So far as I know," observed her mother, "we are indebted to the Danes for our fairy cult. The folklore of this and many other localities, abounds in legends of the little people."

Other topics were touched on, the conversation maintaining its sprightly character. When leaving, the officers asked and obtained permission to repeat their visit, thus a warm friendship was speedily established between this interesting quartette—much more than friendship between two of the party, as the sequel will show.

Just as Addenbrook and his companion got outside the little, wicket gate, opening to the road, they were accosted by a tall beggar-woman, wearing an old, red handkerchief round her head.

"God bliss yir purty faces an' grant yis long days an' good health," she said. "Mebbe yir honours 'ud giv' somethin' ti a poor widda?"

"Which of us is the 'purtiest?'" inquired Major Bethol, staying his step.

"The wan gies me the biggest helpin' 'ill be the purtiest in my eyes."

"Don't you hate the English?"

"Th' English, th' craythurs, nivir did me innny harm."

"Well, the Sassenachs," put in the Colonel.

"Och, the Lord love yis, thim's the divils entirely. May yir honours nivir ha' innny commarce id thim murdherin' ruffins!"

"Where do they come from?"

"I'll not mintion the place, but it's down here," tapping the ground with her stick.—Her interlocutors exploded, gave her some silver and passed on.

"Well," observed Addenbrook, "she's full of spirit, palpitates with life—"

"Do you mean the beggar-woman?"

"If you like," smiling.

They got their horses, were soon mounted and followed by their orderly, rode back to Newry, swift as Arabs in the chase.

CHAPTER IV.

The reader's attention is specially directed to a couple of letters, found years afterwards among the correspondence of Lady Georgina Addenbrook:

Newry, June 15th., 1817.

"Oh, Georgie, mine! I'm heart-sick! I'm exasperated to the limit of endurance! Oh, that this whining conglomeration of beggary called Ireland would vanish in a cataclysm. Oh, that the two men we both love had never set foot on its curséd soil! Our hopes are wrecked, our plans mere dissolving views! All through the machinations of a mountain witch, a Papist commoner! a chit with a pretty face! My visit was passing most agreeably—Adolph more attentive than usual, not a hitch anywhere, till one evening about ten days ago, he and Lionel rode to a old, romantic place called Carlingford, and came back raving—yes, absolutely raving—about the extraordinary beauty of two women they had seen. The subject possessed them to the exclusion of all others.

"Next forenoon they started off in the same direction, and on their return announced having had luncheon with the 'beauties'—mother and daughter. They were more captivated than ever, went to Carlingford again and again, met here but to discuss the physical loveliness, magnetic charm, ineffable smile, grace, accomplishments of these paragons, who according to them, are endowed with every gift calculated to make men act,—in my opinion,—like insufferable idiots!

"I became anxious, too, on their own account. Had nothing to fear on score of the mother; it was the girl, and as two men and one woman spell tragedy, I dreaded lest a coolness should arise between our models of friendship. I accompanied them once, but the women were from home, so missed seeing them. I then decided on getting up a picnic party to their mountain, with the view of inviting them, thinking they would appear to disadvantage among persons of birth and breeding. Alas, I only hastened the catastrophe!

"No need to detail particulars, except to say the party was large and as select as possible. The O'Neils had politely declined our invitation.

"After luncheon, I made an excuse to call at their house—in quest of boiling water for tea. Found the mother more beautiful than anticipation had led me to believe possible—doesn't look a day over twenty-eight! She graciously proposed tea be made in her kitchen, and added, my party could be accommodated with a table and seats in front of her cottage. Knowing the rest wished to get a glimpse of the girl, I readily consented to the arrangement, and invited this person and her daughter to join us.

"In a short time we were all assembled. Mrs. O'Neil assisted in dispensing tea, and we sipped the fragrant beverage out of her old china, amidst a good deal of hilarity. Some of the men walked about, some sat on the grass. When I looked for Adolph and Lionel they were nowhere to be seen! A lady told me they had gone into the cottage. I was about to send a message when Lionel appeared at the door, carrying a harp, and followed by a tall sylph, in a high-waisted, white frock, a bunch of pink rosebuds at her throat. Next came Adolph, music-stool in hand. I don't exaggerate, when I say the girl's transcendent beauty caused a vibration to pass through the company. Her wonderful hair—pale golden, soft and glossy as floss, rippled over her head and fell in ringlets almost to the end of her skirt. These magnificent tresses were tied loosely back with black velvet ribbon. Her skin milk-white, teeth dazzling, ears small and delicate, cast of face Grecian.

"The men moved forward, their souls in their eyes—such souls as they have,—and the women grew green with envy!

"Lionel advanced and said, 'Miss O'Neil had kindly consented to sing an Irish air to the accompaniment of her harp.' The minx, smiling and blushing, made a deep curtsy and seated herself at the instrument, in a pose that showed to perfection the exquisite contour of neck, shoulder and arm—The hand that swept the strings was white and beautifully formed.

"As I gazed at the enchantress, I experienced a presentiment of coming evil. My lips snapped. I know my countenance revealed something of what was passing in my mind, for, on looking towards the mother, I met her black, unfathomable orbs resting on my face, as if she read me through

and through; nor did she avert them; it was I who had to look in another direction!

"Her daughter sang Eileen Aroon' and vanished, before the applause had subsided, followed by Lionel; later, by Adolph, who returned in a few minutes, looking pale and grave, then my brother emerged, to all appearance radiantly happy.

"The very atmosphere grew stifling. I wished to rush from the place. My mood must have been contagious, for a cloud settled on every face.

"On the way back, Adolph made several attempts to recapture his gaiety, but was far from succeeding.

"This morning at breakfast, Lionel informed me he had proposed to Miss O'Neil and been accepted! The Furies obsessed me, yet I remained calm. While I write, he is on his way to the syren!

"I am about to implore my father to handle his infatuated son without gloves, and to use all his influence to get this regiment quartered elsewhere. Won't he be frantic?

"To-morrow we start to pay our long promised visit to the Viceregal Lodge

Your affectionate and afflicted.

MADGE."

.

"Newry, June 27th, 1817.

"Dear Georgie—I returned from Dublin last night and found your letter awaiting. Yes, I'm sure you are deeply afflicted by what has taken place. Cheer up. I still hope to see you Lionel's bride.

"His regiment is under orders for India, and this hateful alliance can't be entered into, for, at least, a year. We shall lay plans to prevent its ever being entered into at all. My designs are deep, though I keep outwardly so amiable, my antagonism isn't suspected, and I get credit for a generosity of sentiment I'm far from entertaining.

"The capabilities of crime—latent in all humans—are already astir in the depths of my being; nor do I discourage these temptations—on the contrary, I listen and consent

when their suggestions seem feasible. I'd willingly drown or poison this scheming interloper, rather than see on her head the coronet of my family.

"That my father should appear so complaisant amazes me beyond anything. On receipt of my information, he despatched an old friend to Carlingford to interview these creatures. Who could it be? No friend in reality, or he wouldn't have reported: 'These ladies would grace any circle.' I presume this sapient ambassador has been bewitched like the others. The minion's mother has written to the earl! Her audacity! My father tells me Lionel has confided in him—everything has been above board, and he mustn't be hard on the poor fellow! Is this senility? His lordship isn't sixty. I'll give up trying to know anyone.

"I should have enjoyed my visit to the Viceregal, had I been capable of enjoying anything. We had long drives—the scenery everywhere beautiful. I was told Dublin has visibly declined since the Union. It appears the confluence of nobility and gentry to the city, during the sitting of the Irish Parliament, made Society brilliant and gave an impetus to trade.

"Every second person in this country fancies himself descended from some king or chieftain of the olden time. Lionel has made out the O'Neil dynasty numbered forty-seven kings and reigned five hundred years! Faugh!

"Pride of race is a marked characteristic of the Irishry, who are inflated with conceit, and fancy themselves destined by Providence to play an important part in the universal scheme of things. There's a spot called the Devil's Bit—I suggest the name be extended to the entire island.

"Only think! A shop man in Newry has fallen in love with my maid! She has left, to marry him. The new woman is an Ulster Presbyterian, was ten years with her late mistress, and has been highly recommended.

"Though I have nearly lost hope of ever winning Adolph's love, I have decided on remaining here until the regiment leaves. Write soon to

MADGE."

CHAPTER V.

When Alice had sung for the picnic party, she withdrew, and was followed by Addenbrook to the drawingroom. The lovers found themselves alone for the first time, and seemed supremely conscious of the situation.

Alice, to conceal her agitation, kept turning over the leaves of some music that lay on the table. Addenbrook stood by her side, she could hear his rapid breathing, and felt his silence meant more than words.

Obeying an irresistible impulse, he seized her trembling hand, and said in a low voice of earnest beseeching: "Alice, could you love me well enough to be my wife?"

He read his answer in the lovely eyes raised to his own, and he drew her to his breast. Thus they stood in rapture, till the approach of a hasty step caused Alice to seek to disengage herself from her lover's embrace: "Nay," he said, "no matter who comes, your place is here."

Major Bethol entered. On seeing the position of affairs he was about to make a hasty retreat, when his friend said: "congratulate me, Adolph; Alice is mine."

The young officer, who had grown suddenly pale, reached out his hand and said: "Lionel, your happiness will always be mine. Had you not," he added gently, "better join the others? I think your absence is being remarked." Then to Alice: "Good evening, Miss O'Neil, and—goodbye."

She felt there was an unusual significance in the words. Holding his hand in both hers, she looked earnestly in his face: "Nay, not good-bye, but au revoir."

He smiled, and left the room, his friend delaying a few minutes longer.

When Alice found herself alone, she flew to her room, locked the door, threw herself on her knees, and buried her face in the side of her little, white bed. She remained in this position till a gentle tap at her door caused her to admit her mother, on seeing whom she exclaimed: "Oh, mamma, he whom I so love has asked me to be his wife!"

Mrs. O'Neil kissed her daughter's burning cheeks and smoothed her hair.

"Why, mamma, do you look so grave?"

"My child, the union of persons widely different in rank is rarely productive of happiness."

"But mamma," she replied, with a bright smile, "am I not an O'Neil? and to be Irish of the Irish is to be born noble!"

"You won't get Viscount Addenbrook's relations to think so. Their cold, haughty looks would kill you."

"His love will support me."

"Ah! you think his love would prevent your feeling a slight. As well say your flesh wouldn't feel the lash of a whip, or the thrust of a poignard. More capable we are of love, more intensely we feel the sting of ill-will and hate. Commend yourself to God and implore His guidance."

The afternoon passed in much earnest talk between mother and daughter. Just as the clock struck eight Mrs. O'Neil started from her chair and said, "I had quite forgotten this is my evening for arranging Grannie Carthy's bed. Come with me, Alice, you can help. The poor soul would be disappointed if I didn't pay my usual visit."

Shortly after, the two ladies entered a cabin at the far end of the town. At one side of the hearth, stood a poor, but neat, bed on which lay an aged woman, with sharp features and small, piercing black eyes.

"Pulse o' me heart!" she exclaimed, stretching out a skeleton-like hand, "I ha' bin listenin' fur the soun' o' yir fut since the sun wint down. An' hev yi her wid yi—the flower o' the mountain? Asthore machree! they tell me yi walk like a queen—that yir hair's like the rays o' the mornin' sun, an' well-nigh sweeps the groun'."

"Hush, hush, grannie!" said Mrs. O'Neil, placing her fingers lightly on the old woman's lips. Alice is just a simple girl, come to wash your face, comb your hair, and help me to arrange your bed. Here's a little wine to strengthen you before we begin."

When grannie had been made comfortable between clean sheets, she took the young girl's hand, looked steadfastly in her face, closed her eyes, and said, while she thus lay: "Alannah, there's trouble in store fur yi. I see two weemin whisperin', an' lukin' at yi wid hate in their faces. Wan's

tall an' slim, t'other short an' black. Yir in a big buildin' like a castle—yir goin' up steps wid thim—up an' up! Now they're comin' down, but yir not wid thim!"

She opened her eyes.

"Now, grannie, did you not see someone standing brave and strong at my side?"

"No, avilish, I didn't, I only see danger fur thim me heart's set on, so as ti warn thim—God purtect yi frum harm."

On leaving the cabin, mother and daughter were enchanted with the beauty of the night. Mountain and bay lay bathed in the silvery radiance of a brilliant moon; the stars throbbed away in their blue distances; there was not a sound save the lap of wavelets against the cliffs.

"Mamma," said Alice, "don't you imagine that bright star, just over Foy, to be the guardian spirit of our mountain, and don't those trees seem to be listening to the murmur of the sea?"

Mrs. O'Neil was too preoccupied to reply; her mind was dwelling on what the old clairvoyante had said.

CHAPTER VI.

Next day, Colonel Addenbrook being engaged on military duty, didn't take time to change his regimentals, so, for the first time, rode to Foy Cottage in uniform.

Mrs. O'Neil received him with grave kindness, and he almost immediately opened the subject nearest his heart.

"My dear Colonel," she said, "I'm fully conscious of the honour you confer on my daughter by soliciting her hand in marriage; but I am far from being ambitious for her entrance into a family in which she would be regarded with hostile feeling. I strongly advice you to reconsider your offer, and to reflect seriously on the consequences of a union with a girl not of your own rank. I also think it right to say that, on the very first occasion I heard of you, your name was associated with the sister of your friend, Major Bethol."

"Madam," he replied pleasantly, "I'm not responsible for what people say about me. I am, indeed, aware my father and sister have matrimonial projects for me I've never had for myself. I'm perfectly free to offer my hand to whom I please."

"At any rate, I should be glad you wouldn't again see Alice until I communicate with the Earl, your father."

"I have already written to him. This address will find him"—handing her a card—"As to my not seeing..."

Before he got time to finish the sentence, the door opened, and Alice entered, laughing and blushing, and saying, "Mamma, I cannot stay away."

She wore a soft black dress, that gave the fullest effect to the dazzling fairness of her complexion. Never had she appeared more bewitching. On observing her lover's uniform she clasped her hands and cried:—"Lionel, how soldierly you look!"

He laughed and drew her to him; then looking at her mother, said:

"Madam, no power on earth will prevent my marrying the girl I love, provided she herself is willing to have me."

For answer, Alice nestled closer.

"I thought," observed Mrs. O'Neil with a meaning smile, "you regarded the English as the enemies of your country."

"Ah! but Lionel will become more Irish than the Irish themselves. Think of our loved Geraldines."

Mrs O'Neil took out her watch. "I'll give you twenty minutes."

"Madam," pleaded Addenbrook, with a winning smile, "perhaps you'll graciously extend the time, when you hear I accompany my sister to Dublin to-morrow, so you won't again be afflicted with my presence for at least a week."

"Then half an hour." So saying, she left the lovers to themselves.

CHAPTER VII.

During his visit to the Lord Lieutenant, Addenbrook learned his regiment was to embark for India in August. Had it been possible to take Alice with him as his wife, his departure for that distant portion of the Empire would have suited admirably; but there was no getting over his father's single request, that he should delay his marriage one year. The Earl had written: "My boy, make me one concession—'tis all I ask—

Don't marry for another year. If, at the end of that time, you still wish to espouse this Irish maiden, I'll place no further obstacle to the accomplishment of your wishes."

On his return from Dublin, he hastened to Foy Cottage, and showed this letter to Alice and her mother. He was greatly depressed at the prospect of leaving so soon. In consideration of his approaching departure, Mrs. O'Neil consented to his seeing Alice frequently; but only alone for short intervals; she had strict ideas of propriety, and Addenbrook admired her all the more for acting up to what she considered right.

The sudden announcement of his going abroad had taken her and Alice by enough surprise to banish nearly all recollection of the distinguished looking personage Earl Wilmington had sent to make their acquaintance. The stranger—a tall man, with snow-white hair, and well defined black eyebrows—had landed at Dundalk, driven thence in a carriage and pair, and announced himself by the name of Symington. He partook of luncheon at the cottage, remaining for a couple of hours in amicable conversation with the two ladies.

August came, to separate the lovers. Alice, buoyed up by the delightful assurance of being loved, supported the hour of parting with more fortitude than her fiancé, who, indeed, broke down completely. Vows and protestations were repeated over and over again, with promises to lose no opportunity of communicating by letter.

The young girl wondered greatly at not having once seen Major Bethol since the memorable day Addenbrook had asked her to be his wife. Nor did he come for leave-taking. He sent a kindly message, and a beautifully bound volume of selected poems, as a souvenir.

CHAPTER VIII.

Scarcely had the regiment sailed from Southampton, when Lady Madge and her confederate put their heads together for the purpose of devising some means of making away with the young creature who, by unconsciously foiling their schemes, had incurred their deadly hate.

The better to conceal their iniquitous designs, Lady Madge wrote her brother, that the more she reflected on his choice the more charmed she became at the prospect of receiving this lovely, unsophisticated girl as a sister. She went on to say, that dear Georgie and herself contemplated a trip to India early in the summer of the following year, and if Lionel wished his bride-elect to accompany them, they would chaperone her with pleasure.

Other letters followed in the same strain, all of which were sent to Alice, Addenbrook being highly gratified by the affectionate interest his sister and her friend manifested in his happiness,—little suspecting they were elaborating plans that, if successful, would blight his fondest hopes.

The ladies had come across a fair haired young girl, about the height and age of Alice O'Neil, to whom they were showing marked kindness—said she looked delicate, and would, in time, be sent to the country for change of air.

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Among the castles owned by Earl Wilmington was an old feudal fortress on the coast of Wales. Though dating from the thirteenth century, it was intact, its massive masonry having withstood the ravages of time and storm and siege in those turbulent ages when internecine warfare was the established order of things. The building was erected on the summit of a rock that projected into the sea, and, at ordinary tides, was enclosed on three sides by water. Though to a certain extent modernised, by having had barbican and draw-bridge taken away, the structure, with its battlements, square tower, loopholes and dark walls—thickly overgrown with ivy towards the land side—carried the mind to the far past, and suggested some grim old warrior who had held his own 'gainst fearful odds.

Everything was severe, and in keeping with the traditions of the place. A flagged stone terrace ran round under the windows. If the grass in its interstices spoke of neglect, it spoke also of rest and peace after war.

Somewhere in the vast thickness of the walls there was concealed a mural chamber, that, in the olden time, only the Lord of the Manor could locate. However, during the lapse

of the solemn centuries that passed over the stronghold—impregnable as the rock on which it stood—the secret had not been so inviolably kept. No need—who, then, concerned himself about the castle or its mysteries? Yet the number of persons who knew the whereabouts of this hidden cell could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Among these was Lady Madge. On a day in her early girlhood, when severity of weather kept people indoors, Earl Wilmington, accompanied by his daughter, took to exploring the ancient structure,—showed her this arcanum of bygone ages, and instructed her in the working of the secret spring of a particular panel—the opening of which gave admittance to what was, according to circumstances, an ark of refuge or a death-trap. It was now to be used in the latter capacity. Two high-born women had concluded that the surest and safest way to get rid of this “Irish whipster” was to immure her in the wall of an all but forsaken old castle—one which its owners hadn’t occupied for years, and in which the staff of regular servants had been reduced to the housekeeper, an aged butler, and a woman who kept the place and its antique furniture aired and dusted. This accomplished, they would give out that the young girl had been lost—swallowed up in London, where so many people mysteriously disappear, never to be heard of again. They would then institute a search, so earnest and vigorous that, not only would suspicion be disarmed, but those who suffered from the bereavement would feel grateful. Those ladies lived in a good time for the aristocracy. True, the French Revolution had sounded an alarm not to be mistaken; but King Demos wasn’t, even then, more than half awake. Some years were to pass before the million-handed giant would discover to the full, his mighty power—surely the most momentous discovery of the nineteenth century.

Lady Madge and her friend little suspected that among the initiated was a person who lived under conditions widely different from their own.

William Ingram, a young coachman, was quite familiar with the concealed apartment. His forbears had been in the service of the Addenbrook family for generations. William

had been reared by his grandfather, who had made him the depository of much legendary lore in connection with the venerable pile about which we write. Among the rest, he had heard how, once on a time, when two masons were making repairs in the tower-room, they had discovered the secret cell, and in it a skeleton, supposed to be that of a young man of rank, who had suddenly and unaccountably vanished, and who had been last seen in the vicinity of the castle. These men were long dead and gone. Young Ingram, boy-like, became fired with the ambition of unravelling the mystery of the hidden apartment. Being the son of an old retainer, he had free access to the fortress in the absence of its owners, and, after many unsuccessful attempts, made the discovery on which he had set his heart—a discovery that had far-reaching consequences!

CHAPTER IX.

1817 saw a disastrous harvest in Ireland. The potatoes rotted in the ground—sickness and want stalked through the land. Mrs. O'Neil's resources were taxed to the utmost—she and Alice displayed the zeal of saints in visiting the sick, and in relieving the destitute poor.

The year of Addenbrook's probation passed. It was finally settled Alice should proceed to London in the "leafy month of June," preparatory to setting sail for the East, in company with the two ladies so frequently mentioned.

Though Mrs. O'Neil entertained many misgivings as to the desirability of this arrangement, she made no objection, and in May, went with Alice to Dublin for the purpose of completing her trousseau.

When the day of parting arrived, Alice—her eyes blinded by tears - tore herself from her mother's encircling arms, as non-passengers were notified to disembark from the packet about to start for Holyhead.

Soon the waves of Dublin Bay rolled between the bride-elect and the many friends who had come to see her off.

She was the envy of her female acquaintances, who believed her born to tread on roses and never feel their thorns.

Mrs. O'Neil was warmly congratulated on the brilliant

destiny in store for her daughter—one day to be a Peeress of the realm! No one suspected tragedy might be in the air; nor surmised that the life of the maiden, esteemed so fortunate, was in jeopardy!

On arriving at Holyhead, Alice was met by Jane Montgomery—Lady Madge's maid—a tall, slight woman, with a pale face and gentle expression, who informed her they weren't to proceed on their journey till next morning; but that her heavy luggage was to be forwarded to London directly. The young girl was glad of the delay, which gave her time to recover from the effects of her first sea voyage, and enabled her to write to her mother.

Fortunately for our heroine, Jane Montgomery was a good woman—imbued with religious sentiments—feeling strongly the eternal distinction between right and wrong. In Newry she had heard much of Miss O'Neil, and knew, by many a word and sign, how that fair girl was hated by the haughty lady she served.

During a residence of some years on the Continent with her late mistress, she had acquired a considerable facility in Italian and French. As she wasn't given to air these accomplishments, she wasn't known to possess them; so occasionally Lady Madge, or her inseparable companion, let fall, in one or other of these languages, words of startling import.

As time passed, she became convinced these proud patricians were engaged in hatching some sinister plot against a person or persons. Though hardly knowing why, she couldn't help wishing that the young Irish beauty would never come within the sphere of their influence.

Jane and William Ingram had privately arranged to get married, in the not distant future. They sincerely rejoiced at the prospect of travelling together when Lady Madge and her friend set out from London, ostensibly to receive Miss O'Neil on her landing at Holyhead.

They had heard nothing of a sojourn at Addenbrook Castle till they had reached that part of the journey where it was necessary to diverge from the main route. Here, Jane was sent forward to meet Alice and bring her to the old fortress—in which the ladies would await her arrival.

Alice soon became aware of Jane's kindly solicitude for her comfort, and was glad of her companionship when they set out, early next morning, on their journey.

It was evening before they arrived at the principal entrance to the immense, high-walled demesne, that surrounded the once famous stronghold.

The young girl's heart sank as the great gates swung open to admit the vehicle in which she sat. There was a massive, sombre, almost gloomy grandeur in the outlook, that appalled her.

The grass had encroached on the broad carriage drive. There was a growth of underwood beneath the venerable wide-spreading oaks and chestnuts—suggestive of matrons with children about their knees. The sky had darkened ominously, huge drops of rain splashed down at intervals; the trees tossed fretfully, as if annoyed with the winds for not leaving them in peace, now they were so heavily laden. Jane, too, as well as Alice, was awed, and thought the avenue would never end.

At length they drew up, in front of the heavy oak-door—slowly opened to admit them.

When Alice entered the great mediæval hall, with its capacious fireplace, coats of armour, implements of warfare, and trophies of the chase, she felt chilled to the heart, though Jane tried to look bright, and smiled encouragingly.

They were met by a small, thin-lipped woman, with snow-white hair, who said cursorily, "You can follow me."

They followed her up broad stone stairs to a room, the furniture of which would have engaged Alice's delighted attention in any other mood than that in which she now found herself.

So this was her reception! What could Lady Madge have meant by writing to Lionel as she had done?

The housekeeper said that the ladies would receive her in the library, when she'd have had something to eat. She was next conducted to a small room on the ground floor, where dinner was laid for two.—Jane was indignant, and protested she wouldn't eat a bit till Miss O'Neil had finished her meal.

To this Alice wouldn't consent, though she well understood the significance of being placed on a level with the maid.

She wouldn't have tasted a morsel, had not Jane been there. She forced herself to eat, fearing the kindly creature's feelings would be hurt if she didn't do so.

After dinner, Jane went to give an account of her stewardship. That done, she came to conduct Alice to the august presence of her hostess and her hostess's friend.

The two sat in the deep recess of a mullioned window—in a truly splendid apartment.

Lady Madge appeared engaged on a piece of needlework, her companion held a book.

Lady Georgina Bethol was tall and slight—had a delicate skin, cold, light blue eyes, rather long white teeth, and an aquiline nose—too pronounced for beauty. Like her friend, she was an aristocrat to the finger tips—the kind of whom Addison says: "Their quality sits uppermost in all their discourse and behaviour. You read ancestry in their smiles, their air, their eyebrows."

On Alice being announced, Lady Madge just turned her head and said in a loud key, "So, Miss O'Neil, you've got this length." Then to her vis-à-vis, with a wave of the hand: "This is the young person of whom you have already heard."

„Indeed!“ replied her ladyship, staring rudely at the "interloper."

No need to conceal their real sentiments now, the "young person" being completely in their power.

"Sit down," said Lady Madge, pointing to a chair.

Alice did not sit down. Roused by this treatment, she said: "Pray excuse me—I'm fatigued," curtsied, left the pair to their cogitations, and escaped to the bedroom she was to occupy. Here she found Jane, who stared in amazement at her pallid face and quivering lips. Unable, any longer, to control her feelings, the poor child burst into tears, and her slight frame shook with sobs.

Without saying a word, the maid gathered her in her arms, pressed her to her warm, womanly heart, and held her there till this emotional outburst began to subside. She then said softly: "Miss O'Neil, darling, you ought to be able to bear something for the sake, of the man who loves you. What wouldn't Lady Georgina give to stand in your shoes?"

"You are quite right, Jane, I should be ready to suffer for his sake, and more so for the sake of One who suffered for us all."

"Well, now, dear, compose yourself. Stay here, and I'll bring you some tea. You must be dead tired." She hurried away on her kindly errand, and Alice, left to herself, raised her soul in pious supplication to Him Who is the best and surest consolation of all who suffer.

Jane was not long in coming back, with some excellent tea, which she coaxed the young girl to take, and next set about lighting a fire; for though it was June, the chill of winter had crept into the air. One could fancy January had come back for a scurry over the land—to see how it looked in summer-time. The evening had become tempestuous; they could hear the boom of the waves against the rocks, the screech of the sea-birds as they darted wildly past the window, and the moan of the wind—like the voice of one in pain. Truly, the beginning of Alice O'Neil's journey was not auspicious.

CHAPTER X.

That night, Jane found an opportunity of unburdening her mind to William, who listened attentively to her forebodings, and said: "Be careful. Isn't Miss O'Neil quite in their power? What can you do? If they gave her a push into the sea, who dare question them? If they gave her poison, who dare say he suspected them? I once heard an ugly story about the grandmother of this very Lady Madge. She was said to be in love with a gentleman who'd have nothing to say to her, and it was whispered she had made away with him, for he never more was seen, and, years after, his skeleton was found in a walled-in-room,—no one outside her family knew anything about. That room I discovered, when a lad." He proceeded to tell his sweetheart all about the secret chamber, and how he had found it. Jane left him, not in any sense re-assured,

At breakfast next morning, the ladies condescended to be more gracious to their guest. After the meal, Lady Madge vouchsafed to trot her through the principal apartments, by way of showing her over the castle. She then told her to

put on her outdoor things, as they were going for a walk in the demense.

Jane Montgomery watched their movements—every faculty on the alert—till a bend in the avenue took them out of her sight.

The two ladies returned in about an hour and a half. Alice was not with them!

"Montgomery," said Lady Madge, "put anything belonging to Miss O'Neil in the carriage. We're to pick her up at the gate-house. It wasn't worth while to bring her back. You don't look well, so remain here for a few days, I won't require you." They had bungled in bringing her at all! "'Tell the coachman, we're ready to start.'"

Jane flew on this errand to William, and told everything that had just happened, in as few words as possible. His face showed grave concern, and he said: "She's not at the gate-house—not a bit of her. I saw three figures in the distance among the trees, I kept my eye on them, they got on the strand, came up the steps of the sea-wall, went up the tower stairs, and weren't long above, till this key was thrown out of a window into the sea,—as they thought; but the tide was too far out, and I picked it up soon as a chance offered."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Jane, who had grown deadly pale, "isn't it well I told you? Hurry, and get them off, that I may run and see if they have really left the poor thing in that murder-hole!"

The travelling carriage was soon at the door, and the two gentlewomen were driven off. At the gate-house, the coachman was ordered to pull up, that a tall, slight girl might take her seat with the occupants of the carriage. As William was not acquainted with Alice O'Neil's appearance, he felt completely baffled, and began to dread. "Jane might raise ructions for nothing."

.
Earl Wilmington was on a visit to a friend in Shropshire. In London, he had said good-bye to his daughter and her friend, not expecting to see them again till after their return from India.

His lordship's time was divided between the Continent, the

Capital, a charming seat on the South Coast, and the houses of his numerous friends. He was a handsome man, largely endowed with the social gift, and was much in demand. In youth he had been wild and reckless till his marriage to a woman of lofty character and sympathetic nature, whose influence saved him from the moral and material ruin to which he had been plunging headlong. She was long dead, but he still held her in grateful and loving remembrance.

The old "Welsh barrack," of which his progenitors had been so proud, held no attraction for him; nor did he intend to visit it during his stay in Shropshire, till prompted by a dream that was, to say the least, singular. He thought, as he walked up the carriage drive to Addenbrook Castle, he was unexpectedly joined by a tall lady, cloaked in grey, and so closely veiled he couldn't see her face. As he and his mysterious companion came in full view of the building, he observed the tower was surmounted by a black flag, to which the unknown pointed with outstretched hand, saying at the same time: "Albert, go there." She then rose into the air, face towards him, beckoning slowly to the tower. As she ascended her garments changed to dazzling white. He watched, till the apparition grew fainter and finally melted away. With a thrill of emotion, he felt it was his wife! Next, his daughter and her friend emerged from the castle. Though dressed as adults, they appeared diminished to the size of children! As they stood together, the black flag and upper portion of the old tower fell down on them with a tremendous crash, and they lay buried beneath the debris!

The Earl awoke with a start. The dream filled his vision, so vivid had been its presentment. Sleep fled from his eyes, and he fell into a train of thought in which his daughter occupied the largest share. For the first time, it occurred to him how odd had been her attitude towards Lionel's marriage, how a strangely amiable complaisance had succeeded the most violent opposition. Her going to Holyhead, in compliment to a future sister-in-law, had appeared quixotic. However, as she liked to act independently, he hadn't tried to control her movements. His reflections resulted in a decision to start next morning for a glimpse of his Welsh fortress.

CHAPTER XI.

As Alice went up the tower stairs with her companions she remembered Granny Carthy's predictions. The recollection didn't cause her to feel nervous as to any bodily harm being intended. The highest tower room was reached. It contained only a few articles of dilapidated, mildewed furniture. This apartment, like the others, was panelled in oak. On Lady Madge's pressing a spring in one of these panels, it flew open and disclosed what seemed a gaping sepulchre. Her ladyship appeared about to enter, then, drawing back, as if to show precedence to a guest, she said, holding the panel open:

"Miss O'Neil, have you any wish to inspect this curious mural-chamber?"

Alice held back.

"At least you can look," continued her hostess.

The doomed girl approached the opening, to find herself pushed in, with a violence that brought her forehead in rude contact with the opposite wall.

The panel closed! She heard the door locked,—heard the retreating footsteps of the two proud demons who had left her there to die!

She was at first too dazed to realise all that was meant by this sudden incarceration. When, at length, the truth flashed on her in its awful intensity, her brain reeled, and she might have lost her reason had not religion come to her aid. She felt as if scales fell from her eyes. Judging the feelings of another by her own, she saw how Lady Georgina must have suffered, if she loved Lionel, when she, Alice O'Neil, came between her and the object of her affection!

"Oh, why!" she cried, "did I not think of this in time? I'd have renounced him, rather than be the cause of what this lady must have surely endured!"

At the thought of her lover and her mother, scalding tears fell down like rain. Where, now, was the rose-tinted future? Sponged out in an instant, by a cruel fate! A lonely death by starvation held its place!

In her anguish, she knelt down, and with uplifted hands poured forth her soul in earnest supplication to the Throne

of Mercy. As she prayed, a heavenly calm was infused into her being.

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Where was Jane Montgomery?

Little better than a prisoner! Her ladyship had left strict injunctions, she was not to be allowed the liberty of the castle, and the two old retainers prided themselves on carrying out her instructions to the letter.

As soon as the carriage had bowled off with its occupants, she had been requested to step into the housekeeper's room, where she was immediately locked up by the venerable butler, to keep her from "rampaging," as he said. This old servitor, in addition to his professional avocation, acted in the place as factotum, and consequently, having no time for espionage, had recourse to this summary method of rendering it unnecessary.

In vain Jane protested against such treatment. In vain she tried the windows,—that mode of escape was impracticable.

For two hours she endured the agony of suspense. At last the key turned in the lock. As the door opened, she made one bound towards it, pushed her jailer aside, and before he had recovered his equilibrium, was on her way to the tower.

"Miss O'Neill! Miss O'Neill!" she gasped, bursting into the topmost room.

A sobbing voice replied.

To open the panel was beyond her power. She flew to look for help, and to her delight, found Earl Wilmington himself, standing in the hall, leisurely surveying an ancient weapon.

At first, he thought he had to do with a lunatic. A short explanation convinced him he was mistaken, and he almost ran to the place he knew so well.

Alice was liberated! Was this scared, pallid, white-lipped girl, with red eyes and blood-marked forehead, the vision of radiant loveliness the Earl had seen in Carlingford? For, it was he who, under the name of Symington, had paid the flying visit to Foy Cottage, in order to form his own opinion of the girl his son wished to marry.

Alice clung to him hysterically, crying: "Oh, Mr. Symington, send me to my mother!"

He tried to soothe her, as one would try to soothe a

frightened child, half-carried her from the place, and desired Jane, who had stood by sobbing, to get some wine.

The young girl was stretched on a bed, where she lay like a lily that had been flattened to the ground by a storm.

"Poor little, sensitive flower," said his lordship, bending over her, "those who would trample on you must have in their nature the cruelty of fiends."

He despatched his own man for Mrs. O'Neil, who was still in Dublin, and wrote to Lionel, detailing circumstances that rendered his home-coming imperative,—expressing a hope Adolph would be able to accompany him. He next directed that the castle be made ready to receive visitors. According to his instructions, a small army of workers were to be employed next day in the house and grounds—all on account of Mrs. O'Neil. The Earl liked the idea of again seeing the classically beautiful woman whose acquaintance he had made in Ireland.

After enjoining strict secrecy on Jane Montgomery, he set out, hoping, by making no delay at any of the sleeping stages, to reach the Metropolis in advance of his daughter.

With regard to the recent occurrence, he felt as if he had aged years in one quarter of an hour. Madge a would-be murderess like her grandmother! Yes, the taint was in her blood. What a trickster! What a hypocrite! What a devil, she had proved herself to be! His thoughts reverted to his son. Lionel inherited his rigid principle and good heart from his mother. "The boy," he said mentally, "is phenomenal. 'Tis to be hoped he won't harden, or in any way deteriorate. These upstanding fellows sometimes grow pitiless, or get inflated with pharisaical conceit. Because they have never stumbled, they begin to think they couldn't fall. Well, for so far, he wasn't one of these, thank Heaven."

His lordship decided on keeping from Lady Madge and her accomplice the knowledge of how their criminal designs had been providentially frustrated, till they would arrive in India. He hoped, by that time, the two men, on whose account he was certain they were about to undertake so long a voyage, would have left for England.

His arrival in London preceded that of the ladies, who hadn't bargained for so unwelcome a presence.

He was looking out of a window, when their travelling carriage drew up in front of the house. Three persons alighted. His lordship hastened to the hall.

"Who is this?" he inquired, fixing his eyes on the girl. He had no greeting for Madge or her friend, and his expression was stern enough to intimidate even them.

"Who would it be?" replied his daughter, evasively.

"Who is it?" he thundered.

"Miss O'Neil," she answered, aghast at his manner.

He turned on his heel and left them.

Lady Madge tapped her forehead, to give her *protégée* the impression the Earl wasn't quite of sound mind.

"One would think he had some occult knowledge of things," observed her friend, in Italian.

"Impossible."

Alice O'Neil's substitute didn't appear at dinner. Poor girl, she had little idea of the part she had been called on to act!

When his lordship joined the ladies in the drawing room, he expressed a wish to speak to the young person he had seen in the hall.

"She's too fatigued to leave her room," replied Madge.

"Fatigued! The devil! Aren't these chairs soft enough to rest her? Bring her here."

His daughter went for the girl. Her dinner had been served in a room of which, her hostess carried the key.

The so-called Miss O'Neil entered the drawingroom with evident trepidation. His lordship asked her a number of questions which to the dismay of her patronesses, were answered in an accent decidedly English.

At the first pause in the questioning, Lady Madge said she was sure Miss O'Neil wished to withdraw. No objection being made, she escorted her *protégée* back to the room she had left. On her return to the drawingroom, her father said: "How is it that girl speaks with an English accent?"

"She assumes it, the better to please," replied the Lady Georgina.

"Do you tell me that's the goldenhaired beauty who was to eclipse the Gunnings?" queried the Earl, looking from one to the other."

"I always told you," replied his daughter, "Lionel was madly infatuated. Had you paid attention to what I first wrote, you might have nipped his folly in the bud: instead, you sent some fool or fogey to inspect the tricksters, and abided by his report."

The Earl had to exercise a good deal of control, not to disclose who the "fool or fogey" was. He just muttered an imprecation, and then said aloud: "For some time back, you have appeared to view Lionel's marriage with complaisance."

"When one feels she must acquiesce in the inevitable, had she not better acquiesce with a good grace?" was the sententious reply.

According to arrangement, Maggie Austen was to be quietly sent off to a school in France, the morning after her arrival at Addenbrook town house. Her noble benefactresses had settled to defray the expense of her education for one year in the establishment selected. Indeed, they had perfected their plans to the most minute detail. Of course, the Earl's unexpected appearance had complicated matters. The future laughs at our prescience, and loves to thwart those who depend implicitly on their own fore-sight.

Next day, at luncheon, Lady Georgina called to inquire how it was Miss O'Neil hadn't kept the appointment she had made to meet her.

"Why," exclaimed her friend, with well assumed surprise, "she left this some hours ago. It is to be hoped she hasn't lost her way in the city."

The Earl looked earnestly at them both. He was studying their method of procedure, and hadn't been able to fathom their object in bringing to London a substitute for Alice O'Neil. The reason was now obvious. This girl had done her part, and wouldn't again appear on the scene. The callousness of the two audacious schemers appalled him. Never before, had he so clearly realised the cruel, hardening power of inordinate pride.

No tidings of the girl! Lady Madge interviewed the Chief of the Detective Department. A vigorous search was instituted. The newspapers took up the matter, wrote sensational articles,

and gave a detailed description of the missing young lady. When a week of energetic, but fruitless, search had elapsed, Lady Madge suggested that her brother be communicated with. The Earl desired her to write, and to allow him to read her letter.

She sat down, and in heart-rending accents bewailed the tragic occurrence, and detailed the efforts made to unravel the mystery of the beautiful girl's extraordinary disappearance.

On reading this production, her father glared at the writer, exclaiming: "Good Lord! Good Lord!" Next day saw him en route for Wales.

By the time Mrs. O'Neil reached Addenbrook Castle, Alice had, in a great measure, recovered from the terrible nervous shock she had sustained. When informed of what had happened, Jane Montgomery was clasped in the arms of a well-nigh distracted mother.

Every post brought a most kind letter from the Earl. In due course, he himself arrived, and, at a glance, saw what a fine setting the old fortress made to the queenly presence of the beautiful, Irish widow.

He took her hand, and said

"Mrs. O'Neil, an unfortunate father counts on your sympathy."

"My lord," she replied, "I sympathise with you in all sincerity. You have done all in your power to atone for your daughter's crime."

"Not till I have recompensed the excellent young woman who, under God, has been the means of saving the life of your child. It is my intention to pension her."

"Any recompense made to Jane Montgomery will have my lasting gratitude."

Little more remains to be said. In a few weeks, a Dublin clergyman was requisitioned to perform a marriage ceremony in Addenbrook Castle, that resulted in Mrs. O'Neil becoming Countess Wilmington!

Lady Madge and her friend arrived in Calcutta, to learn that their respective brothers had set sail for England. A sealed document was placed in their hands, the contents of which, informed them they stood arraigned as heartless criminals

in the estimation of those with whom they wished most to stand well.

The Alice to whom Addenbrook came back, was not the Alice he had left—more angelic perhaps. The exuberance, the laughing loveliness of girlhood, had been succeeded by a tinge of gentle sadness that roused the tender, protective element in her lover's manly nature, an element that the succeeding years but deepened and intensified. And who would have recognised in that gentle, loverlike husband, the Addenbrook who had charged at Waterloo—the look of battle in his eyes?

ATTIE AND HIS FATHER

A TALE OF THE POOR

It was a cold wet evening, towards the close of May, 1847; * a fire of thorns crackled and blazed in a cottage, situate on the slope of a rugged mountain in Co. Kerry. On one side of the hearth, an old woman, with bent form and far-away look in her brown eyes, sat gazing into the fire. Opposite her, a square-faced, broad-shouldered man, held on his knee, and leaning against his breast, a very beautiful boy of about three years. A little girl aged seven stood in front of the fire, while a sister, younger by two years, squatted on the floor beside her, and stroked softly the fur of a small dark grey cat that lay in her lap.

The poor people seemed glad of the warm glow that proceeded from the hearth, and from time to time, the man took a branch out of a bundle of bramble in the corner behind him to add to the fire.

Not a word was spoken, till Ellen, the elder of the two little girls, broke the silence, by saying "Thorns look nice in the burnin'."

"Thru' fur ye, Ellen," replied her father, who, in his own way, felt that the expression had a figurative meaning undreamt of by the speaker. Had he been instructed, and better able to formulate his thoughts, perhaps he would have compared the blazing thorns to those base things in life which are beautified by the glow of passion, but which turn to most unlovely ashes when the flame they served to nourish, dies away.

The old woman looked across at her son, two or three times, as if she wished to speak, but could not bring herself to the point of utterance. At length, she managed to say, though her voice trembled, "John, dear, there's no use thryin' to houl' out any longer. I must go."

"Go where, mother?" inquired her son, though he knew very well she meant the poorhouse.

"Where wud it be, John? There's but the wan place for me."

* Year of the Famine.

"Well, mother, if you an' the childre' wur *there* fur a short time, it wud allow me to thry for work in the North. I wudn't stay longer away then I cud help."

Though this family had been on starvation allowance for weeks, John, who was a peasant farmer, had shrunk from proposing the poorhouse to his aged mother. He saw there was no other resource, and now, as the suggestion had come from herself, he was spared the pain of making it.

"If I cud make me way to Dublin, I'd be sure of work in a big place like that," he said.

"Dublin's a long way aff," replied his mother.

The wistful expression passed from the children's faces, at the prospect of a change. Attie sat erect, and looking up into his father's face said: "Faser will oo' buy me a histle?"

"I will, me man."

The sisters exchanged glances and smiled meaningly, while Attie, encouraged by his father's readiness to comply, made another demand.

"An' will oo' buy me a 'ip?"

"To be sure; sonny must get a whip," said the indulgent parent.

Annie tossed her head and frowned: she thought Attie shameless.

"Annie must git somethin' too," said her father, taking in the position of affairs.

"An' pussy, an' Ellen, an' Granny," added Attie.

"What 'ud he get pussy?" queried Annie, addressing herself to Attie.

"Sweeties."

The little girls ridiculed the idea.

"She'd rayther hev a mouse," said Ellen.

"Pussy's the girl's that's fond of the mice," remarked the father.

"The mice isn't fond of her thin, I'm sartin," said Ellen.

"I know if I was a mouse, I wudn't."

"The mice is fond iv her," rejoined her sister, "she plays wid 'em."

"It's the quare play," said Ellen.

"'Ere's no mice in Dublin," put in Attie. "Faser, what will 'oo' buy pussy?"

"A red ribbon for her neck."

"Pussy," said the child, bending down, "faser will buy 'oo' a ribbon fur 'oose neck."

"Don't ye see she's sleepin'?" remarked Annie.

"It makes no difference," said Ellen, "she knows his manin, as well sleepin' as she wud wakin'."

"Ellen, yir a cute wee girsha," observed her father.

After a short pause, the man said cautiously, as if feeling his way:

"I cud go in the mornin', to ask Joe Kerrigen for the lone iv his horse, to take you an' the childre."

"Very well, John," was his mother's sole response. Then, with hands tightly clasped, and cheeks wet with undried tears, she resumed her long, sad gaze into the fire.

The stock of food was almost exhausted; however, now that they were going to leave, John thought he could afford a meal more than they had been accustomed to of late, so he put Attie down, and rose to prepare some supper.

The little boy sidled round to his grandmother, and rubbed his head, kitten-like, against her arm.

"Blissins on me purty pet," said the old woman, looking down, and kissing the upturned face. "Poor mother's pet-lamb," she continued, stroking down the child's golden curls.

"Musser's in heaven," said Attie, softly.

"She is, darlin', an' Attie 'll be there too, some day."

The supper consisted of coarse Indian meal porridge, which was eaten greedily by the children.

Supper over, and prayers said, the little family once more gathered round the hearth, where—knowing it was their last night, they sat till an advanced hour.

When, at length, the grandmother lay down on her poor bed, it was with a feeling akin to what she might have experienced had she descended alive into an open grave, and heard the clink of spades that were soon to cover her with clay.

Her unutterable depression brought on a deep sleep, in which she dreamed that she stood in a wide sandy plain, between two rows of skeleton trees. The whole scene lay in a weird light, that showed an encircling range of coal-black hills, on which multitudes of men, women, and children,

walked about in their death-clothes. To her horror, she saw coming towards her, down between the naked trees, a hideous skeleton, of gigantic size, clothed in black, and wearing a badge, on which the word "hunger" was written in large white letters. She fell prone, and awaited her doom, every moment expecting to feel the monster's foot on her neck. She tried to move her lips in prayer that she might die, but could not move them. Oh, the agony of that interminable suspense! Then a voice, but of thrilling sweetness, sounded in her ears. So full were its accents of tenderness, that she felt it must be the voice of Christ the Lord. She was told to rise and fear not.

Penetrated to the depths of her soul with a feeling of unspeakable happiness, she quickly obeyed. All was changed. In her dream, the ghastly light was succeeded by one that was full of life and joy. Large, lovely stars were visible, in a blue and rose-coloured sky; the trees were in leaf, while crowds of primroses and violets did homage at their feet. A meadow stretched where the sand had been; beautifully rounded green hills were covered with numerous flocks of sheep and lambs, whose fleeces were white as the white clouds that float in the summer sunshine. Raising her eyes, she saw one of the bright stars open, then Attie's mother, resplendent in glory, came forth, and beckoned her to come.

The grandmother awoke, and a smile passed over her face. "God pardon me," she said, "fur bein' so cast down wid me sorra." She fell asleep, and did not dream again that night.

In the morning, before John Sullivan left to procure a horse and cart, his mother, who could not walk without assistance, asked him to help her outside, that she might take a farewell look at the old places, so he left her seated on a chair in front of the house.

It was a beautiful dawn, and the land was flushed with golden light. Around, shone the green flames of furze and fern. In the distance the great azure sky bent down to lave her forehead in the deep blue sea that lay like a broad band between the horizon and the valley that stretched to the foot of the mountain, on whose side the grandmother had dwelt so long. Every spot of the landscape was endeared by some

association of her youthful days, and memory kept flying over the past, now here, now there, but still returned without a token from the bygone years. The last sight—if we know it to be the last—of anything we are bound to by tender recollections, is intensely sad. Mrs. Sullivan was sustained in this bitter hour by the remembrance of the wonderful dream, or rather vision, of the previous night. She believed her end was near, and looked forward to the inevitable hour with unbounded trust. The Valley of Death is only dark to those who contemplate it without hope, and the greatest sorrows are best borne by those who view them in the light that falls from the Cross.

Nature, however, is still weak, so the old woman's accession of spiritual fortitude did not prevent her heart from sinking, when a shout from the children announced that their father was in sight. While he was still in the distance, Attie mounted a large stone, and kept calling "faser," at the top of his voice.

The quiet, care-worn man at last reached them; and in less than half-an-hour they were ready to start. Annie wished to take the little cat, but her father objected, on the score that pussy was happier at home.

Pussy herself sat on the door-step, gravely contemplating the movements of her friends. As the cart rolled lumberously away, Attie stretched out his hand, saying, "tum, puss, tum," and raised a shout of delight to see her begin to follow, though her pace was slow and undecided, and ended in her looking after them, and then turning back.

Seven miles of a rough, hilly road brought John Sullivan and his family to the workhouse. On gaining admission, they found themselves in a passage, filled with hungry, miserable-looking creatures. The children grew frightened and began to cry, on seeing that they would be separated from their grandmother. When they were being roughly jostled off. Attie, with quivering lips and streaming eyes, looked back reproachfully at his father, as if to say. "Are you going to let them take me away."

Poor John wiped his own eyes with the sleeve of his jacket, and running after his darling, he stooped down and

whispered that he would soon return, with a whistle and a whip.

The grandmother was sent to the infirmary, where she and her son parted, never again to meet this side the grave. When Sullivan was leaving the ward, he saw that his aged parent was following him with her eyes. He went back to her; she drew his head down again, and kissed him, saying in a voice shaken with emotion: "God fur ivir bliss you dear, you've always been a good son to me."

The poor man commenced his journey home, feeling as if there was a cold drip of salt tears at his heart.

It was a soft, sad evening, and the very hills and trees seemed to share his grief. After leaving the horse and cart with their owner, he walked slowly towards his desolate cottage. Stillness, as of death, reigned around, and there were no smiling faces to greet him. Attie was not there to dart forward, beaming with delight, to be taken in his father's arms; but a couple of marbles, and a little twig with a piece of cord attached to serve for a whip, smote Sullivan's heart with the recollection of his darling.

Opening the door, he entered the tomblike abode. The few things it contained were in disorder. An old blue pinafore was thrown across a stool; a pot and some tins were lying on the floor, as was also a chair that had been upset in the hurry of departure.

John looked about him, and then began to kindle a fire of bramble, to boil some water for a mouthful of porridge. There was a little meal, which he divided in two portions, one for present use, the other to bake into bread for his journey. This accomplished, he sat down beside the blaze. A plaintive mew startled him, and in an instant the little cat sprang on his knee and began to rub her head against his breast.

"Why, pussy, ye crathur, is this where ye are?" said John, stroking the back of the favourite, "Yir frettin' about them, ye are; but they're safe; they won't die iv hunger at any rate." Here the man's breast heaved, his whole frame shook, a storm of sobs burst forth, and great tears fell in a shower on the furry back of his dumb friend.

This outburst was succeeded by a calmer and more hopeful state of mind, and when Sullivan had knelt down and

prayed with sincerity and confidence, he rose, comforted and strengthened, for the struggle that was before him. He threw himself on his bed for a few hours' sleep, and four o'clock the next morning saw him nailing up the little windows with some old boards. He placed the cat outside, and, knowing there were plenty of mice and birds to supply her with food, he did not feel uneasy about her future. When quite ready, he locked the door, hid the key in the thatch, took one long look all round, and started for the road.

John walked till noon without a halt. He then sat down on the wayside, to eat a little of his precious bread. When evening had come, our traveller found himself in a wild, solitary part of the country. Too fatigued to proceed, he looked about for a place to pass the night. There was a grove of firs, to which he directed his steps. The plantation was old, and contained a great number of boulders thickly covered with moss. Having selected a place to rest, John leaned his back against one of the trees, and was soon fast asleep. He awoke about midnight, feeling cold and stiff. The white moon looked sadly down on him; the wind had risen, and was moaning fitfully through the branches, swinging them backwards and forwards. Sometimes the tall firs put their heads together, as if whispering about the stranger. He fancied they said: "Poor man, don't disturb him: he's tired," and then more softly still: "His children are in the poorhouse," after which they tore away from each other, and the wind rushed past them, over the bare fields, crying the same cry. "His children are in the poorhouse! His children are in the porhouse!"

With this dirge still sounding in his ear, the weary traveller again slept, till that mysterious hour when night, on tip toe, steals away, lest she should awake too soon the young children, and the birds, and the toilworn sleepers. When John opened his eyes, the great sun's outriders, in their saffron-hued robes, were stationed on the eastern hills, and a small wind, stepping lightly down from the North, shook gently the grey skirts of the dawn. Our friend sat perfectly motionless, almost awed by the profound solitude of the place. His reverie was interrupted by the entrance of two women, at the opposite side of the plantation. He had not noticed their approach, and their

unexpected appearance caused him to rub his eyes; he thought his sight deceived him; but no, he saw the pair distinctly through the trees. They walked down towards a large fir, and seemed wholly unconscious of being observed. One of the women was young and lovely. She was enveloped in a loose cloak that almost touched the ground. A heavy coil of fair hair had escaped from beneath a broad black velvet hat, and hung far below her waist. Her companion, who was middle-aged, had an evil face, was commonly dressed, and carried a bundle. Placing this on the ground, she commenced to dig a hole, with a gardens pade that the younger woman had brought concealed under her cloak.

John became so interested in the occupation of the two, that for the time being, he forgot everything else in the world.

He rose to his feet, and getting behind the trees, walked stealthily towards the women.

When he reached the spot, he was alone!—Not a soul in view!—The apparition had vanished into thin air. “God be near me,” exclaimed the astonished man, reverently, while his hair stood on an end, and a cold perspiration broke out on his face. He returned to the tree under which he had slept, said his morning prayer, and was just leaving the place, when a robin fell dead at his feet.

He lifted the bird, laid the still warm body on his open hand, and after gazing sorrowfully at it, he placed the small remains carefully on a bunch of primrose leaves, saying: “poor wee thing, it’s all over wid ye. Y’ll nivir fly any more, an’ I hope yir not an’ omen ov ill luck to me.”

At length, Sullivan reached Dublin,—hungry, penniless, and foot-sore.

Rain was falling in torrents as he entered the city. The timid stranger fancied that most of the poor people he met had a bold, vicious look, and this impression increased his despondency.

Turning into a back street, he approached a very poor looking house, and with much diffidence knocked at the door. It was opened by a delicate looking woman, who saw the poor applicant’s story written in his face, before he had spoken a word.

"Come in, good man, and rest yourself; you look tired."
O, the ever blessed power of kindness!

These words, pitifully spoken, were as a fresh shower to the parched earth. To his last day, John remembered this reception; to his last day, he blessed her who gave it.

His benefactress had little to spare, but of that little she gave ungrudgingly; and she did more than that. She lent a sympathetic ear to his tale of sorrow, and cheered him with hopeful words.

"Keep up your heart," she said; "the poorest man can have God for his friend; the Queen on her throne cannot have a greater."

This good woman's name was Callan. She was a widow, with an only son, who was as benevolent as herself. When young Callan came home and heard John's story, he told him that relief works had been started in the city, and that next morning he would show him where to go.

Mrs Callan made John bathe his feet in a tub half filled with warm water, and told him he could remain for the night in her house.

So the poor man went to rest, refreshed in body and mind, blessing the merciful Providence that had directed him to that haven of refuge.

Sullivan got employment at a small wage, and his hostess consented to give him a bed for a shilling a week. He worked hard, for the thought of his mother and his little ones was never absent from his mind.

About three weeks after his arrival in Dublin, John was seized by a presentiment of coming misfortune that he could not shake off. In vain did his kind friends endeavour to allay his fears. He would start out of his sleep, dreaming that someone was cruel to Attie. Cost what it would, he resolved to go and see if there was anything wrong with his helpless family.

Sullivan had been obliged to purchase a pair of brogues, and he started to retrace his steps to the South with exactly threepence in his pocket. He walked night and day, with few intervals of rest. So preoccupied had he been, with the dread of danger of some kind having overtaken him, that

he completely forgot about the whistle and whip for Attie, until he had almost reached his destination.

Bitterly reproaching himself for his neglect, he commenced to peer into the shop windows of the town in which the poorhouse had been built, in search of the coveted objects.

With a thrill of delight, John observed a small bundle of yellow, wooden whistles, marked one halfpenny each. In the same window there hung a penny whip. A purchase was soon concluded, and never did gold-digger experience more joy on the discovery of treasure, than Attie's father felt on gaining possession of these two simple toys.

When John reached the poorhouse, he was informed that his dear old mother had gone to her rest ten days after her admission to the infirmary.

The children—what of them?

The girls were well; but the little boy had caught scarlet fever, and was not likely to recover. The father's face blanched; he trembled, and grew cold. After an agonising delay, he was allowed to go to the sick ward.

There lay Attie, beautiful as an angel, his cheeks aglow, his broad blue eyes wide open, his gold curls on the pillow. Soon the child's arms were round his father's neck, and fond kisses were imprinted on his own little burning mouth.

"Thank God, thank God, my darlin' looks so well," exclaimed John in the fullness of his heart.

"See what I've brought to sonny," he continued, producing the whistle.

The child smiled, seized the toy and raised it to his lips, but could emit no sound. This was disappointing. Several attempts were made—always the same result.

"It's dumb, faser," said Attie in a low, husky voice, as he examined the whistle to find what was wrong in the workmanship.

There was still the whip. Surely, it would not fail to give satisfaction. John held out his hand to give Attie an opportunity of testing the excellence of this present.

"Don't strike hard, sonnie," he said, in an undertone.

On receiving a faint lash, he drew his hand hastily back, exclaiming: "Thunder an 'ouns but that's tarrible."

Attie was radiant. This little by-play between father and child was enacted so quietly, that only the patient in the next bed could tell what was going on.

In a little while the whip dropped from Attie's hand, and he fell back exhausted. The excitement of seeing his father over, his dangerous condition became at once apparent.

John instinctively looked about, as if for a place of refuge.

He had the feeling of a hunted animal when it first hears the cry of the pursuing hounds. The feeling was but momentary. With yearning love, he passed the night in attending to his sick child. The most skilful nurse could not have excelled this hard-handed man in deftness and lightness of ministrations.

Morning brought no hope to the heart of the watcher. A great change had taken place, the fever had subsided, but daylight fell on waxen eyelids, and death-like calm of cheek and brow.

The nurse came, as she had done often during the night. She looked upon the dying child, moistened his lips, smoothed his golden hair, and turned aside to hide her springing tears. The distracted father wrung his hands, and hung over the little sufferer, pouring out words of love and despair.

"Me wee, tindh'er pet, can I do nothing to aise ye? Pulse o' me heart, life will be black when yir taken away." Then, when he heard that ominous sound in the throat, the import of which we all know so well, he flung up his arms in frantic supplication, crying out, "Oh, God! oh, God! will he die?" and fell senseless on the floor.

At this moment the doctor entered the ward, and hastened to apply restoratives. The afflicted man was carried to another room, where he was stretched on a bed, and every attention paid that his condition required.

When the physician reached Attie's bed, he saw the child would very soon die.

"It is all up with the sweet little fellow," said he, to a kindly nurse who kept moistening Attie's lips, and wiping the cold sweat from his forehead.

Medical aid could be of no avail so the doctor folded his

arms, and stood looking down on Death's final struggle with Life.

The struggle was soon ended, and Heaven had an angel more.

Noticing the whistle and the whip, lying on the coverlet, the doctor said, "I suppose the little boy's father brought him these things."

"Yis," replied the nurse, "he brought thim yisterday."

"Poor soul!" he said, as he turned to the window to hide the tears that rushed to his eyes.

Yes, Attie was dead. There was no dressing of the bed, no assembling of relations to speak of the departed, as one too bright and good to live—an unconscious, but common, sarcasm on those spared to make the pilgrimage of life. The body was washed, the limbs composed, the hands folded on the breast, and the gold curls arranged on the brow. The beautiful, dead child looked the embodiment of a holy prayer.

Five or six old women stood round the bed, and a soft light stole into their careworn faces as they contemplated the lovely remains. Evidently, their thoughts were lifted to that life in which there were no poor. A ray of sunshine, happening to stream in, so irradiated Attie's head and face that one of the women said suddenly: "I'll go an' see, wud his father be able to come, the sight iv the blessed chile will do his heart good."

John was brought. With a wild, haggard look he approached the spot where his darling lay.

"Hid yi ivir see a sight like that since yi wur born?" asked one of the poor creatures in a low voice, as she caught hold of the father's arm. "Don't yi see by that smile, that he saw Heaven open to him before his sowl wus out o' the body? Would ye grudge him to the Lord, that has left yi sich a token o' yer chile's bliss?"

"I don't grudge him to the Lord, Nancy. Praise be to Him fur ivir an ivir. He gev' an' He has tuk away; but it's hard to part wid him that wus the light o' me life, an' I feel as if me heart wus broke."

"An' no blame to yi', at all, at all," said one of the sympathisers. "Iv coorse, its hard on ye, ye poor crathur."

Sullivan knelt down, and buried his face in the pallet at

Attie's feet; and his frame heaved, with the great sobs that expressed his grief.

The door of the ward was thrown open, by a man who carried a small, rude coffin, which he placed in an unoccupied bed, where one of the old women considerably covered it, until the father could be got away.

The poor man, as if divining what had taken place, rose from his knees, kissed his little pet's hands and lips for the last time; then, more dead than alive, made his way out of the room, and, in a very short time after, the sweet young flower, that had been plucked from humanity's throbbing breast, was consigned to the keeping of mother earth.

THE DUCK MERCHANT.

ABOUT two o'clock a.m., Paddy Feenan locked the door of his cabin, pushed the key under the thatch, looked up at the distant stars, took off his old hat, and said: "Glory be to God on high, an' on 'arth, paice ti men iv good will."

Having thus performed his morning devotion, he lifted two large baskets, and set off for the town of K..., sixteen miles distant.

Paddy was a small man, with a stoop—had round, brown eyes, a shrewd, but not unkindly expression; was fifty years of age, looked seventy, was said to be as "rich as a Jew," and was called—in private, "oul' skin-flint."

He was a specialist in his line, and dealt only in ducks.

The rise and fall in prices of this interesting species of poultry was to him a matter of supreme importance. He thought of it when going to bed, he thought of it when in bed, he thought of it when out of bed. Ah! had those ducks that dwelt in the vicinity of K.... only known how the mind of a certain little man was occupied with the consideration of their market-value, they'd have become too conceited for anything!

To be sure, a rood of ground, a little pig, a goat called Peg, and a couple of hens claimed a share of his attention; but there was no need for speculation to be active in their regard. Ducks, and ducks alone, kept Paddy's mind on the alert.

"Ye moight know the price this hour," he said, "but the mine iv man cudn't tell what it ud be the nixt. I've known him to lepp up a pinny apiece inside twinty minutes."

The fowl he bought in K.... on Wednesdays, he sold on Thursday in L..., a market town six miles off, so that his merchandise on these two days gave him a tramp of forty-four miles, and a profit that ranged from one shilling to three!

On two occasions he made four shillings; but it wasn't to be expected that such strokes of good fortune would often occur!

Paddy would have earned more money, and "ate betther," had he worked for the farmers; he preferred less, with liberty. His experience of service was not pleasant. "'Twas Feenan

here, an' Feenan there"—"Feenan, yi lubber," or "Feen, yi fool;" as if Feenan hedn't a sowl in his body, as well as the best iv thim."

The little man was sensitive, and didn't relish rough treatment, so he struck out ^{his} a line of business for himself, and became his own master.

He never married,—so long as his mother lived she needed all the help he could give.

His early journey to K.... procured him the privilege of witnessing sunrise once a week—nor was he insensible to the glorious spectacle. As soon as invisible hands began to spread out a carpet of crimson and gold, whereon the monarch of day would set his kingly feet, Paddy uncovered his head, and repeated the prayer he was accustomed to say at his cabin door.

To the minor beauties of nature, as beauties, he was stone blind

The trembling dew-drop, the twitter of a bird awakening, the shape of a leaf, the endless shades of the various colours, the graceful contour of hills, the sparkle of rushing waters, had no attraction for him—nor had any other feature of the landscape, save as it could, or could not, be utilised. If he saw a blue lake, calmly reposing among hills, he thought "twould be a foine place for ducks." If purple mountains lent grandeur to the scene, they interested him in proportion, as they afforded good grazing for goats.

Poor soul! it needed the wonders of the starry host, or the glory of sunrise, to elevate his mind one little moment above the sordid cares of daily life. *and ducks*

On this particular morning, our merchant was, as usual, in the market, long before it began to fill with middle-aged men who looked old, and women, not long past their first youth, whose faces were lined and careworn.

He assumed a brisk air, and went about inspecting those baskets in which the objects of his solicitude were "cramped, cabined, and confined."

For some time he bargained and higgled to no purpose; his low offers got him many bad names. However, on these occasions, he put his sensitiveness in his pocket, and manifested the most philosophic indifference to abuse.

At last he came across a woman with a dozen pretty white ducks that pleased him better than any he had seen.

"What di yi want apiece?"

"What'll yi give?"

"Fourpence, all roun'."

"Are yi jokin'?"

"Not a joke. I think they 're worth it."

"Di yi think I fed them on nothin'?"

"They fed themselves on wather an' frogs, an' that didn't cost much."

"They got their fill o' male an' praties ivery day o' their lives. Feel that boy, an' thin say, wus he fattened on frogs."

Paddy balanced the fowl in his hand. Believing it was his best policy to depreciate, he said: "Hev I a duck at all in me han'?"

"Mabbe yi think it's a goose."

"I'd be a goose meself iv I thought that; but as yir a dacent wumman, an' 'ud loike ti be early home, so as not ti be traversin' the road at an untimis hour, I'll give yi six shillin's fur the lot."

The woman was silent for a minute or two, then she said, "I hev a good piece to go, an' there's wan iv the childre sick, so I'll take yir offer, though I expected as much more."

When the purchase was concluded, Paddy regaled himself with a penny cake and a pint of buttermilk ere setting out on his homeward journey.

He had several halting places on the way. One of these was near the entrance to a fashionable residence.

A cook belonging to the establishment happened to pass, saw the ducks, felt their weight, and asked their price.

"Half-a-crown a pair," said Paddy, little expecting to be taken at his word.

"Follow me to the house, I'll ask my mistress to buy them."

Amazed at his unwonted luck, he did as desired, and in a short while after, had the satisfaction of depositing his burthen in the poultry yard, and of putting six half-crowns in his pocket.

He pursued his journey, hardly knowing whether he was on his head or his heels, till he knocked up against a cow, and said,—“No offince, ma'm.” He laughed at his mistake, and

became more collected. "Bad scan ti me," said he, "if there hed bin any wan in hearin', they'd sayed I was cracked."

It ocured to him that rich people must be very light-hearted. "As fur meself," he mentally observed, "I've only got a few shillin's more than us'al, an' I'm jist brimmin' over wid merriment."

No wonder! He would soon be able to add a fourth pound note to the three he had safely stowed away in the thatch! This being a gala day, he purchased a few luxuries, in the shape of tea, sugar and butter; and if the hens had laid, he'd have a couple of eggs for a meal that would combine dinner and supper in one.

On reaching home, he lit the fire, hung on the kettle, and while waiting for it to boil, fed the pig, put the goat in her corner, and attended to several household matters.

When Paddy finished his meal, he replenished the fire and sat down to cogitate.

What a blissful mood he was in! The recollection of his encounter with the cow made him laugh, till the tears ran down his cheeks.

His features had scarcely settled—after the unusual demand made on their risible muscles—when the door was pushed suddenly open by a woman, who rushed in, threw herself on her knees, wringing her hands, and exclaiming.—"Och, wirrasthruel! wirrasthruel! what'll become iv me this day! Och, Paddy, darlint, befrind me in this hour iv me black disthress! Phil's after smashin' the windys in Grogan's public-house. The peelers hev' him, an' unless I can pay a poun' right aff, he'll be in jail, an' I'll nivir lift md head till the day iv me death."

"Len' me a poun', an' as sure as me name's Kitty Morgan, I'll pay yi ivry pinny. I'm clane out iv me senses wid trouble. I know yi hev a kinly heart, an' God allys rewards thim that's kine ti a neighbour in disthress."

This stormy appeal to his feelings transformed the duck merchant to stone. His face became rigid, and while the pleader wailed, he sat immovable.

Mrs. Morgan was one of those fatuous mothers who love best, and cling most to, an ill-doing son. Phil was a drunken

lout, and a heart-break to all connected with him. Paddy knew all this. Kitty Morgan had some claim on him; she had no pig, and gave him her potatoe-skins to help his along. This consideration, however, didn't weigh, for he intended to pay her a shilling at Christmas.

Somehow, 't was borne in on him, he was under the eye of *One* who loved a kindly deed, *One*, who had done much for him—still, the struggle was sharp. Well the little man knew, a sixpence of his hard-earned money he'd never see, once it passed into Mrs. Grogan's fingers. No matter, for the sake of *One* above, and through pity for a mother's tears, he wouldn't be hard.

"Come back afther a while, an' I'll see what I ken do fur yi."

The woman rose from her knees, and went out, blessing him.

Paddy stood on a high stool, and thrust his hand into the hole, where a roll of three old notes had been lying for months. It was raining, and his hand got wet. He felt something soft,—an awful foreboding took possession of him! What if damp and rain had utterly destroyed his secret hoard?

His frame shook, as if stricken with ague. He lit a candle, and peered into the place of concealment. There were no notes!—Just a pulpy mass,—that was all! He clutched it, and staggered back to his seat.

When Kitty Morgan returned, she found the 'duck-man'—as he was frequently called—sitting on a chair, pale as death, beads of cold sweat on his forehead; his right hand closed over something, with a death-like grip, his left holding a farthing candle that swayed backwards and forwards, as if it, too, had received a shock it couldn't bear.

"In the name iv God, Paddy, what's come on yi?"

He opened his eyes slowly, looked at her, told what had occurred, and corroborated his statement by holding out the hand that held the rotted remains of his treasure. She uttered a shriek, and ran away, thinking of her own disappointment—not of his.

For a long while, Paddy seemed buried in thought; then, with that sublime faith which supports the poor in their many trials, he said, resignedly,—“The Lord give an' the Lord tuck away, blist be the name iv the Lord.”

AUNT FLUFF'S MARRIAGE

MISS MAYFIELD, old, rich, and amiable, occupied a villa in the vicinity of Fitzwilliam Park, Antrim road—a locality, not so many years ago, much less thickly populated than at present; for Belfast has been flying forward on the wings of progress, and now—to the lasting credit of its inhabitants—ranks as one of the most flourishing centres in the United Kingdom.

The lady mentioned was mother's dearest friend, and received in our family the pet name of "Aunt Fluff," on account of the white fluffy curls clustering about her forehead.

Though known to her circle and the general public as "Miss Mayfield," our friend had been married! As the retention of her maiden name was a riddle I had been curious to solve, it was with no slight interest I listened to the following recital from her own lips, one wild, wintry evening, as she and I sat in front of a bright fire in her elegant drawing-room.

"Well, Dora, to begin. I was known to be an heiress. Exactly nine months after my beloved father's death, I first met the man to whom I was subsequently married.—One afternoon, as I sat at that window, feeling very lonely, I saw your grandmother, dear Mattie Cameron, coming up the avenue and ran to meet her.

"Oh, Mattie," I cried, "I'm so glad you've come; I'm quite depressed."

"But not coming to stay, Blanche," she replied. We're having a stranger for dinner at six, and want you to join us. Our guest's the son of an old college chum of father's who has brought letters of introduction. Place a guard on your heart, he's singularly handsome, yet there's something about him I don't like—I couldn't trust him if I tried."

"You absurd creature!" I replied, "what a way to talk on so short an acquaintance."

"Ah! but first impressions are the most reliable: intuition's a safer guide than experience. He'll be sure to please you, he talks so well. I'll run back now; come as soon as you can." And off she went, without ever entering the door.

Her father, Dr. Moffit, was my guardian and most valued

friend,—a visit to his house one of my greatest pleasures. On this occasion, I donned my handsomest black dress, and, being in mourning, wore jet ornaments. I was thirty-six, and not handsome. On reaching the Rectory, I found Dr. Moffit and his son-in-law, Rev. John Cameron, in the drawingroom."

"Well, Blanche," exclaimed the elder gentleman, coming forward, "I've got an admirer for you at last. He's gone to his hotel, to dress for dinner."

"At last!" I echoed, making a mock curtsy.

"I mean, at last one who will please you. Upon my word, you look well! Those black things suit your complexion. Don't they, John?"

"Yes, indeed," he replied, "Blanche has arrayed herself for conquest."

We heard a knock at the hall door. Presently, the stranger was ushered in. I think I see him, so handsome, so distinguished-looking—so debonair—so calculated to make a favourable impression,—till he smiled!

I hold a smile to be an infallible criterion of character.—I didn't like his, and felt sorry I didn't.

He was tall, square-shouldered, dark-complexioned; had an aquiline type of face, dazzlingly white teeth, was clean-shaven; his beautiful head had a crop of short, crisp, black curls. His dark eyes were full of mesmeric power—everyone on whom they rested felt their influence—Mattie averred two demons looked out from their depths.

If he didn't smile pleasantly, he talked well. At dinner he was superlatively interesting. Among a variety of subjects on which he discoursed brilliantly, he touched on some recent development of materialism—threw himself back in his chair, and, with a gesture of disgust, vowed he'd show—no quarter to unbelief;—if he had his way, atheists "would be drowned in the depths of the sea."

I was timid, tongue-tied, conscious of appearing to disadvantage. I've often remarked, unemotional women succeed best with men; not being incommoded by an excess of feeling, they are always at ease, and can keep themselves well in hand.—A cold woman is never shy.

In the drawing-room, Mattie and I played in turn. My friends were pleased to say I excelled in music. On rising from the piano, Grimshaw, who had been turning the leaves, remarked, in an earnest undertone, "You do play." I felt more flattered than if he'd been profuse in compliment.

We left together. He saw me home, and at parting, pressed my hand. This produced such a tremor of pleasant imaginings, I couldn't sleep for hours after I went to bed.

Dr. Moffit had service in his church every morning, and I was a regular attendant. Guess my satisfaction next day, on seeing my handsome acquaintance of the previous evening already there—looking as devout and recollected as you please.—When I left the church, I found him waiting outside.

We walked together to the house, and I invited him to breakfast. He said grace with marked reverence. Indeed, he talked so piously—appeared so God-fearing, I ventured to say it was strange one so deeply imbued with religious sentiments hadn't entered the ministry.

He told me, he had once contemplated that career; but on mature reflection, dreaded to incur the responsibility of so high and holy a calling. "However, Miss Mayfield," he continued, "there's much apostolic work a layman can do. He can lecture on moral subjects, teach religion to the poor, and set a good example by living according to the maxims of the Gospel. With a pious wife, his power of doing good is immeasurably increased. Everyone should marry. A man not married is a man maimed."

I remarked, there were many unhappy unions.

"In such cases," he replied, "the fault rests with the husband; he doesn't cherish his helpmate as he ought. A wife should be placed on a pedestal, and well-nigh worshipped. My danger," he went on, fixing his wonderful eyes on my face, "would lie in forgetting the Creator for the creature."

He talked in this strain—assumed an air of melancholy, as if the depravity of the times caused him serious thought and some suffering.

He was pleased with the house and grounds,—said he quite envied me my pleasant quarters. I let him know the Camer-

ons were coming for tea, and said, if he cared to join us, we could have a rubber at whist.

He readily accepted my invitation, and praised the Camerons; said he'd be delighted to meet those charming people again, and that he must soon call to pay his respects to my venerable Rector, who struck him as being a most saintly man.

When he left, I was in a state of exhilaration—something new and strange had come into my life. In the hope of restoring my nerves to their normal condition, I ordered my horse, and went out for a good canter.

The evening passed most agreeably, and the following morning, Mr. Grimshaw and myself enjoyed another tete-a-tete breakfast.

No need to dwell on further details—enough to say, that before the end of the week we were engaged!

I was amazed at my good fortune. Can it be possible, I asked myself, I'm destined for so much happiness? My dear guardian—who had been completely satisfied with Grimshaw's credentials—was pleased, and said, he looked forward with no slight gratification to my future husband's taking up his residence among us; he would be a most desirable acquisition to our circle, for, in this degenerate age, men of his stamp were rare!

Dr. Moffit had implicit faith in his gift of discerning character. "It is an endowment, child," he'd say, "that has been of great service to me."

Our new acquaintance showed marked admiration for the Doctor; would laugh at his anecdotes, go into ecstasies over his style of preaching, declare his eloquence thrilled him to the soul—he had heard him preach once—and that his sermon had made him a better Christian. He wound up by comparing the good man to some divine of world-wide celebrity. As we generally esteem others in proportion to their esteem for ourselves, it wasn't much wonder the dear, old Rector felt favourably disposed to so ardent an admirer.

Mattie, who was liking Grimshaw less and less, remarked, somewhat bluntly, she hadn't noticed anything particular in her father's sermons—she fancied he used to preach much better.

The Rector looked at her over his glasses, and observed,—“Mattie, the difference is in the soil—not in the seed.” His daughter laughed, and said,—“It must be the soils’s becoming too highly cultivated.”

Mr. Grimshaw appeared anxious we should be married offhand. Much as I was in love, I couldn’t relish this haste. I requested him to go away, and return at his own convenience—a proposal to which he wouldn’t for one moment consent. The banns had to be published, and three weeks must elapse before the ceremony could take place.

There were moments when my fiancé appeared gloomy and preoccupied. Once I looked up suddenly, and found his eyes resting on me with an expression I can never forget. He laughed, and said, “I’m not thinking of you, dearest, but of a scoundrel who once attempted my life in Italy.”

“I sincerely hope I don’t remind you of him,” I replied; “you were looking as if you could murder me.”

On the eve of my marriage, after I had bidden good-night to Grimshaw, I flung myself into a chair, in a delirium of joy, to think over the sweet hours I had lately passed, and to picture the rapture of days to come. I had taken my fate in my own hands, as it were, and neglected to pray for light or guidance.

My fiancé had tried to dissuade me from taking my maid, Norah Carthy. Said he knew a nice girl, who would suit me much better—one, too, that was desolate, and in need of a protectress—the kind of person in whom I’d be certain to take an interest. I replied, there would be no need to retain Norah in my service longer than was necessary; that I should part from her with reluctance at any time, but at present it was absolutely necessary she should accompany me.

What momentous events often depend on a simple decision! Had Norah not come with me, in all probability I should not be here to tell this tale!

The auspicious morning at length arrived—it was October, yet the day was fine as a bride could wish—the subdued, suggestive beauty of the season resting on all things. The sky was blue, the air sweet and balmy, but the sunshine fell on faded leaves!

I was married by the Rector, in presence of a few life-long friends. My wedding gift to the groom-elect had been a cheque for a thousand pounds. He had kissed my hand and pocketed the present with a nod and a smile. I could have excused his kissing my lips, however; during our engagement he hadn't been given to any display of the softer emotions, for which I liked and admired him all the more. We set out for Dublin, where we were to spend a few days before proceeding to London, thence to the Continent. I am forgetting to tell, that during the *dejeuner* I was considerably taken by surprise, to see Grimshaw help himself somewhat generously to champagne. Of course, I shouldn't have minded, had he not posed among us as a total abstainer—stating emphatically he never touched wine.

Our friends came to see us off, and remained until the last minute. At length the good-byes were spoken, the doors closed, and the train steamed out of the station.

We had a carriage to ourselves. My heart beat high, at the prospect of travelling alone with the brilliant man I so passionately loved. It is a thrilling moment, in which a man and woman first find themselves together after the solemn words have been spoken that bind them to each other for life. The go-away journey symbolises their separation from the past they have known, to begin life on a new plane. My husband spent a long time leaning over the train door, before he turned to speak to me. I felt hurt, I expected he'd have taken me in his arms and spoken some lover-like words. Nothing of the sort! When he did draw in, it was to sit down, make some commonplace remark, look at me, and laugh! He then gazed abstractedly out of the window, as if amused at something passing in his mind.

I could hardly believe he was the man I had previously known; there was nothing affectionate in his manner, and the tender homage was all gone!

When we were about half-way, he opened the luncheon basket, regaled himself heartily,—I couldn't touch a thing—he then fell asleep!

A dark cloud floated into my sunshine. I experienced an apprehension of impending evil, with the conviction I had

made a rash marriage! Of what account that handsome face and splendid physique, if their owner turned out to be a cruel, unprincipled man? The tears welled to my eyes. I fervently implored the Divine protection, and it was not withheld.

The journey, begun with so much hope and continued with so much despondency, was over. I saw Nora on the platform; she knew at a glance, something was wrong. Her presence brought a frown to the face of my newly-wedded lord and master.

We put up at Morrison's Hotel. Dinner had been ordered in a private room. The appointments were elegant, the meal excellent, but nothing could please the groom. He swore at the servants, ordering them about as if they were dogs. The amount of wine he had imbibed failed to account for such a transformation.

When, at dessert, an Italian, named Lepardo, was announced. The newcomer had a pale face, a black beard, and a sinister expression. I was conscious of a repulsion towards him not to be overcome.

My husband and he seemed ready to fly into each other's arms. The Italian was introduced, and more brandy ordered!

He hadn't been long at table when he intimated to Grimshaw that a mutual friend was staying in the hotel. I saw that gentleman regard him steadily, as much as to say, "Am I to understand it's so and so?"

"Yes," replied the other with a nod.

My amiable partner finished his brandy, asked me to excuse his absence, and left the room.

I tried to entertain Lepardo—my efforts soon collapsed. An hour passed, no sign of my husband coming back! I rang for Norah, and, when she came, accompanied her to the chamber *she was to occupy!* Here, I sobbed my heart out. The poor thing offered all the consolation she could. I was so certain of Grimshaw's being aggressively intoxicated, I dreaded his finding me out. In that night was concentrated the anguish of a life-time. Had I known but all, I might have had no fear on the score of his looking me up.

Early next morning my little maid brought me a tempting

breakfast. As I had barely tasted food for over a day, I needed nourishment, and forced myself to eat.

I had just finished my toilette, when a knock came to the door;—it was Grimshaw. Norah withdrew. Never was a more consummate actor born,—he'd have deceived an angel from Heaven, much less a poor easily beguiled woman. At first, I rejected his advances with indignation, and for a considerable time remained proof against his penitence and his pleadings. Never at a loss for words, he said everything the occasion demanded in extenuation of his conduct,—blamed himself for taking wine, when he knew it always made him act like a madman—a beast—a demon.

When I still avowed my intention of leaving him, he turned away with a sob in his voice, and applied a handkerchief to his eyes.

I yielded,—we became reconciled. Previous to his entrance, I had fancied I loathed the ground on which he stood; no sooner had I pardoned him, than my love seemed greater for its temporary absence.

He said, some very special friends of his were staying at the hotel; he had invited them to breakfast, and they were waiting to pay their respects to me.

I requested he would join them, and that I'd follow in a few minutes. I remained behind, to bathe my eyes so as to remove all traces of tears. Norah entered, looking very grave, nor did my altered mood cause her face to relax in the least.

On going to the breakfast-room, I found Lepardo, his sister, and a faultlessly dressed, but rakish-looking, young man, whose name I don't remember. I have never seen a more beautiful being than Miss Lepardo—a tall, lithe girl, exquisitely rounded, with a very dark skin, very red lips, teeth like pearls, large black eyes with very long lashes. Her small, elegantly poised head was crowned with shining coils of raven hair.

I looked my admiration. She condescended to appear pleased, made herself most agreeable, and showed that magnetic charm of manner characteristic of the man to whom I had so lately plighted my troth.

We sat down to breakfast, the meal progressed pleasantly—the host at his best.

There were races that day, somewhere near Dublin—I can't now recall the place. One of the party suggested we should go.—I liked the idea. “Well, ladies,” said Grimshaw, “get your things, and I'll order a carriage.”

I ran upstairs to the room I was to have occupied, feeling a load had been lifted off my heart.

Norah hastily entered, her face white as a sheet. She seized my arm in an agitated manner, and asked where I was going. I told her

“For God's sake, dear Miss Mayfield, don't go with them,—you're the victim of a plot—that ruffian only wants your money! You're in a nest of villains! While you were at breakfast, one of the housemaids found a crumpled ball of paper at foot of that bed—she opened it out. It is a letter that explains everything. I have it here. You can read it when they go.

I felt like to faint, and reeled into a chair. She ran down, to say I had been taken suddenly ill. The arch-deceiver was up in an instant—a look of tender concern on his face. I said it was nothing serious; but I didn't feel able to accompany them. In order to prevent his suspecting the discovery, I told him to invite his friends to dinner, and inquired blandly if he had yet cashed his wedding present. He replied he had not, and asked me to kindly have it cashed for him. I took the cheque; he kissed me, and ran laughing down the stairs,—so Norah said; she trembled lest he'd get round me again. Raise the light, Dora, that I may read this letter:

“Imperial Hotel, Donegall place,
Belfast, October 3rd, 18—.

“Damn it, man, have patience! To marry a fool for her money—with a view to get rid of her, first chance—is more easily said than done. We must be circumspect. I'll run no further risk. What progress are you making with the widow? Is Mulberry likely to succeed with that fifty thousand pounder in Bath? I'm to be buckled on Tuesday;—on that day the

heiress becomes my property, her eighty thousand will soon follow suit. She's desperately in love—dare hardly raise her eyes to my face—trembles and blushes like a girl of seventeen, though I'd bet my bottom dollar, she's forty to a day. She's one of these wonderful creatures who soar above the faults and failings common to humanity.

I've played the saint so devilishly well, the Rector—an old humbug—has been speaking about my taking Holy Orders. I said I feared to presume on a divine vocation. He placed his hand on my shoulder and said that my sentiments did me honour,—he admired my humility.

Quite a number of good-looking damsels in this quarter! Morning service is better attended since my arrival. When I look up from my devotions(?) I'm certain to see a pair of bright eyes gazing in my direction.—Am a total abstainer every day till bedtime, then a shrewd fellow attends to my needs, and I afterward tumble into the arms of Morpheus, under the benign influence of whiskey punch! Give this letter to Rhoda. Say I'll see her on Tuesday night, when the old party falls asleep.—Of course you'll both be at Morrison's—Yours,

FRED GRIMSHAW."

When I read this precious epistle, all weakness, hesitation, indecision fled. I felt equal to any emergency. Went out with Norah in a cab; wired to the Camerons to come at once, as I was in danger. I then drove to the office of a lawyer, with whom I was acquainted, and showed him the letter, which so shocked him, that he at once sent for a detective, who was speedily on the spot to read the incriminating letter and hear my story.

He appeared deeply interested, and said he strongly suspected I was the victim of a notorious gang of swindlers who had formed what is called the "Heiress Alliance League," the object of which is to cajole wealthy women into matrimony, with the view of abandoning, or murdering, them as soon as their dowries had been divided among their accomplices. "You've had a marvellous escape; and if you wish to aid the ends of justice, will return to your

hotel, remain for a few hours, as if nothing had happened, until these abandoned ruffians are in irons. What contributes to the success of the scoundrels' is the fact that many of them are well educated, well connected, and well looking."

I was a woman scorned, outraged, duped, and had no objection to witness the discomfiture of the villain who had got me in his power.

On reaching the hotel, I dressed for dinner, and wore my diamonds—once the property of an Indian princess. My object was to make Grimshaw realise to the full all he had lost.

The Camerons arrived before the party had come back from the races. These had made a day of it—had evidently been drinking, and the demon was once more uppermost in my wedded partner.

Miss Lepardo sat down to dinner in a dress of maize silk, and, of course, looked very beautiful. She was in raptures with my gems, clasped her hands, looked at Grimshaw, and referred to them again and again during the meal;—my gentleman suggested I should allow her to try them on. I affected not to hear the audacious proposal; it was repeated two or three times. Then said: "I decline to part with my diamonds to anyone."

Seeing a disappointed look in the face of the lady, the dastard rose with a smile to remove them from my person. I rang the bell,—the signal agreed on. In an instant the room was filled with my friends and the officers of justice!

"Hypocrite! Impostor!" I exclaimed, "your hour has come!"

No need to describe the scene of confusion that ensued. Grimshaw grew white to the lips; it was easy to see his confederates were furious with him. Recriminations in Italian flew from mouth to mouth. After a little, my lord and master demanded, in an injured tone, what this all meant, and declared whoever had been the cause of his arrest would suffer. "I'm the cause!" I called out in a ringing voice,—
"To marry a fool for her money, with the view of getting rid of her at the earliest convenience is more easily said than done!" He regarded me with a sardonic grin.

I withdrew. Next day saw me laid up with brain fever—for weeks I hovered on the brink of the grave.

Grimshaw and his associates were sentenced to penal servitude for life. So bad were their antecedents they narrowly escaped hanging. Miss Lepardo was acquitted—too beautiful, I presume, to be found guilty by a jury of men!

PEG'S BABBY

PEG RAFFERTY was a tall, loose-boned, untidy, inoffensive creature, who only washed her face on Sundays and holidays, or when she attended a funeral—the sole outing her circumstances permitted. She lived with her brother, William, in a cabin on the slope of the "Black Mountain," Co. Louth.

The Raffertys' worldly possessions consisted of two pigs, a goat, a couple of sheep, and a few fowls.

The brother was too grim and close-fisted to be popular; he was, however, a sober, steady man, who got employment from a tenant farmer the year round. His sister, too, was employed as a field labourer—not so regularly, and at a much lower wage. William Rafferty had made up his mind to get married; and his choice fell on a fair-haired, fresh-complexioned young girl, supposed to be dowered with "a fortyin' of tin poun's."

Annie Gregory was an orphan, living with an uncle who had a large family of his own—enough without her, as she was made to feel. Tired of her thralldom, she readily consented to marry the young man, whom she had frequently heard spoken of as an "oul miser."

Negotiations for marriage were frequently carried out on the basis of a commercial transaction, and Rafferty, according to custom, should have come to terms with the girl's guardian before he proposed to herself. This he didn't do, and so "put his fut in it," as he said, afterwards.

He was graciously received by Annie's relatives, when he called to make known his matrimonial intentions. The conversation progressed smoothly, until he remarked—as if casually—"her money'll come in useful. I'm plannin' ti buy a couple iv heifers ti begin wid."

"Is it money yir afther?" growled the uncle, with an ominous glare in his countenance. "I might ha' knowed frum yir characther it wus that wus in yir head. Well, the divil a wan pinny yi'll get wid her. She's hed her mate an' bed here fur three year, an' the tin poun's me brawther left wudn't pay me. I tink he must a' bin aff his head whin he made sich a will."

"At inny rate, he made it, an' yi're boun' be it; yi cud ha' sent her ti sarvice."

"She was but fifteen, an' that wus too young ti sen' her ti the sthranger."

"She wudn't ha' had as hard times wid the sthranger as she had wid you, iv all's throe that's say'd, an' she'd ha' bin payed fur her work. How cud yi expec' ti ha' luck iv yi don't kerry out the intintions iv the dead? It's enough ti make her father turn in his grave ti hear yi."

"Not a turn he'll turn; mebbe he's sufferin fur the will he made. Yi had betther dhrap the iday iv Annie an' luk somewhere else fur a fortyin'. There's an oul maid atween this an' Carlinfoord; they say she's twinty poun'; av coorse, she's a bit grey, an' hes a cast in her eye."

Rafferty left, a crestfallen man. He had dwelt long and fondly on the use he'd make of the ten pounds he had been so certain of getting. His fiancée, who waited outside till the interview would terminate, saw at a glance things hadn't gone according to the mind of her suitor.

On encountering the questioning look in her soft eyes, he said. "Annie, yir uncle's a mane dog."

"Why di yi say that, William?"

"He 'on't give up a penny iv the tin poun' yir father left ti be paid down on yir weddin' day."

"Thin it's all over 'atween us."

Her fair young face appealed to him, and caused the feeble flame in his mercenary bosom to flicker up sufficiently for him to say:—"I'll marry yi at 'iny rate."

In February, he brought her to his cabin as his wedded wife, and, as his sister was worth her room, she wasn't turned adrift from the home of her forebears; besides, there was too much of the milk of human kindness in Annie's nature to wish her to leave on her account.

At this time, tea was much more expensive than at present, and Rafferty had an inveterate prejudice against the beverage on account of its cost. He pretended it was, because "tay made weemen lazy an' good fur nothin' but sittin' at the fire burnin' their shins." His young wife was very partial to the "cup that cheers," and, when possible, Peg smuggled her an

ounce or two out of the proceeds of her own labour in the field.

One day, about six months after his marriage, Rafferty, going to his house unexpectedly, found his wife and sister regaling themselves with the prohibited luxury! Had a wild beast appeared on the threshold, the women couldn't have been more frightened

"Are yis goin' to dhrive me out iv house an' home wid yir infarnal tay-dhrinkin'?" he vociferated. "Get out iv this, yi ugly bag iv bones," making a kick at Peg. "Set the likes iv you up wid tay!"

His wife didn't speak, nor did tea ever again cross her lips under his roof. November following, she died in giving birth to a baby-boy.

Her life had been pathetic; her death was a release from sorrow and never ending care. The gentle girl's sensibilities were too fine to allow of any chance of happiness with the course-fibred lout to whom she had been mated.

The infant, ushered into the sad world its young mother had just left, was a fine, healthy child. A neighbour-woman initiated Peg into the mysteries of baby-culture; it wasn't to be supposed she could have the instinctive knowledge possessed by mothers.

A week after his wife's funeral, Rafferty sold both pigs and sheep, pocketed the price, and left the locality, without a word of explanation; and for nearly fourteen years, the place that had known him knew him not again.

That first winter of the babe's life, Peg was almost starved; she couldn't take work, and had difficulty in procuring a sufficiency of milk for her nursling. Early in the new year, her goat had a kid, and with the increase of nourishment, the babe thrived apace. Everything brightened with the brightening of the skies.

In summer, she was again able to take up field labour, by spreading an old quilt near where she worked, on which "the lamb iv the worl'" could tumble about at will. She had been specially warned not to put him to walk too soon, or he'd be "bandy." She took the greatest care to avoid "sich a misfortyin'." When, at length, he was able to run about, Peg took

great pride in turning up, his petticoats to show "his legs was sthraight as a poker;" - indeed, she had a shrewd suspicion that, if the truth were known, the legs of most people varied considerably from the perpendicular.

In the long evenings, after her day's work, she went up the mountain, and pulled heather, to make beesoms, to sell around the neighbourhood in winter, when work would be slack. While her strong hands manipulated these articles, the baby, placed beside her in a clump of bracken, laughed and crowed, and stretched out hands to the whitewinged seagulls that darted through the air. Ah! these were happy moments. Peg loved the atom of humanity with all the love of her warm, self-sacrificing nature.

When the little one had reached its third birthday, a wonderful thing happened. A young fellow, wishing to give pleasure to the devoted Aunt, presented her pet with a box, containing a gorgeously painted alphabet, and to the good creature's delight, a small sister of the donor, who liked to play monitress, undertook to teach him his letters. Each addition to her darling's microscopic store of knowledge was a new source of delight to Peg. "He's as bright as the mornin'," she'd exclaim, clasping wondering hands.

When Andy had completed his fourth year, his aunt took him to the National School of the place. His advent at this seat of learning caused a commotion amongst the youngsters. "Peg's Babby"—the name by which he was known—ran from mouth to mouth. The master struck his desk for silence, and said he'd insist on the child's getting his proper name. The discovery that Andy knew all his letters occasioned no small surprise, and gave him a good name from the start.

In two years, he could read his book fluently. Perhaps, Peg's happiness attained its highest point when, on a winter evening, she sat at one side of the hearth, the little fellow opposite reading his lesson by the light of a farthing candle. It wasn't what he read, it was his reading, that caused the ungainly woman's eyes to dance in her head as she listened; then, if a neighbour dropped in, as sometimes happened, Andy was called on to exhibit his proficiency, his aunt

declaring "that many's the big man cudn't do what that chile's afther doin'."

At ten years of age, he was presented for Confirmation. The Bishop catechised the children himself, and as "Peg's Babby" was still in petticoats, his lordship took him for a little girl—a mistake that caused an ill-suppressed titter to run through the congregation. However, Andy answered so readily and correctly, the Bishop's praise amply compensated for having mistaken his sex. At each response, Peg's head went up, and moved from side to side, as if she had been taken with a strain of music, and, indeed, the little lad's voice was music to her ear.

This occasion proved the necessity of putting him in trousers; "the chile mus'n't be taken fur what he wusn't." So she procured for his use some male garments that had been discarded by their original owner. The change of dress made no other change in the gentle, affectionate boy, always willing to do as his aunt wished.

His progress at school was so considerable, that Peg's ambition began to soar very high indeed. She wondered could he be a "taicher." The idea took such forcible possession of her brain, she ventured to lay it, in all its magnitude, before Mr. M'Gladery, the schoolmaster, who by no means discouraged the project, saying: "More wonderful things have happened. What age is he?"

"He'll be fourteen nixt November at four o'clock in the mornin'."

"Well, Peg, continue to keep him at school as regularly as you have done up to the present and I'll do all in my power for his advancement."

"May the Lord bliss yi, Mr. M'Gladery, for thim words," and she turned away, not knowing whether she was on her head or her heels. Andy's future greatness so filled her vision.

Alas! "The best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley." The very next day, a letter was placed in Peg's hand—the only letter she ever received. It was opened, and a neighbour read as follows:—

"27 Minch street, Liverpool.

"To Peggy Rafferty—This is to say I'm going to bring the boy here. Expect me next week.

"WILLIAM RAFFERTY."

Peg fell into a seat; the cold sweat broke out on her rugged, homely face and she looked so like fainting, her neighbour ran to get water. When she had come to a little, she said: "Och, avilish, the minute I tuk that letther in me han', me heart stud still, an' I thrimled like a lafe. An' afther all these years, he's to be tuk from me! God's will be done; me heart was too much set on him. Ochone! ochone! must I part wid yi, me darlint." A wild burst of grief succeeded this lamentation.

"Och, Peg, wumman, don't take on that way; afther all, isn't it his father has the best right ti him?"

"Thru' fur yi, but, whin he didn't luk afther him in his tindher infancy, it isn't feelin' makes him want him now."

"But, shure, we hev all ti part wid our childre'; we can't rare thim fur oursel's. They're jist like the birds, soon as they're fit to fly, aff they go."

"I feel very wake," said Peg, rising, "an' iv strength left me, what 'ud I do?"

The blow was as unexpected as severe; Peg hadn't suffered from the pain of apprehension. In the beginning, the sad knowledge of the babe's having, to all intents and purposes, been abandoned by its father, had awakened in her heart deeper depths of love for the helpless mite. How could she now believe, that a parent, who for nearly fourteen years had so completely ignored his responsibilities, was actuated by affection in claiming his son when he could turn him to some account. Affection had nothing to do with it. Rafferty resided in Liverpool, where he had a second wife, a second family, and good wages. He happened to meet a man from his native place, who gave him such a glowing account of Andy's scholastic attainments, he at once decided on taking the lad and putting him to work. Had Andy not been able to read or write, he would probably never have heard of his unnatural, hard-hearted father.

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Once more, William Rafferty's form darkened the door of the house in which he had been born.

"Good evenin'," said he to his sister.

"Good evenin'," she replied.

"Where's the wee fella?"

"Time fur yi ti ax." On the instant, Andy entered.

"Shake hands wid yir father," said that worthy.

The boy stared in silence at the hard face. His father was the cruel fate that had come to change his destiny.

"Aff wid thim oul' things, an' put on the new shute I've brought yi."

He unfolded a parcel, containing a suit of corduroy, ornamented with brass buttons, a pair of coarse socks, and boots that would fit himself.

The suit was a bad fit, but the buttons were bright, and the pockets numerous.

Rafferty had evidently overcome his objection to tea; he handed some to Peg to make ready. He was also supplied with bread, butter, and cold meat for his own use.

When he had refreshed himself, he went out among the neighbours, and was everywhere told about his sister's wonderful goodness to his son. The account made no impression. In his mean, sordid nature there wasn't the most rudimentary trace of justice—that noblest off-spring of true charity.

Next morning, much against Rafferty's will, Peg accompanied him and Andy as far as Carlingford. In vain she tried to stem the scalding tears that would pour down like rain. The lad, too, cried, and at parting, put his arms lovingly round his poor aunt's neck. She commended him to God, and her greatest comfort, ever after, was to pray morning, noon, and night for his welfare.

"Did William give ye anythin', Peg?" queried an acquaintance who met her on her way back.

"Is it him? he niver give me anythin' barrin' the cowl shoulder an' the coorse word."

"Did yi give him a good tongue-threshin', fur the way he negleckit his chile?"

"Musha, where 'ud be the use? Thim as dis wrong's only made worse be bein' towl iv their wrong doin'."

How true! Complain to the unjust of their injustice, and for whips they'll take up scorpions.

It was harvest, and at the end of a day's reaping, about a week after Andy had left, his aunt set out for the rural post office, a distance of two miles, to inquire for a letter.

"Wud there be a letther fur me, Mrs. Malony?"

"Sarra a wan, Peg. There's har'ly time. It ud be a great shame fur Andy not to write afther all yi done fur him."

"Och, sure I wus plasins' meself all the time."

"Well it plased yi ti make a gran' scholar iv him, an' we'll see how he'll repay yi."

"Sure, Mrs. Malony, the chile may be taiched ti be ashamed iv the likes iv me."

Evening after evening, Peg had the same journey for the letter that never came. At last, the postmistress, through pity, assured her if a letter came she would send it, so as to save her "trakin' there time afther time."

A year passed, and Peg, who had never been outside the boundary of the parish in which she lived, formed the daring resolution of making her way to Minch street, Liverpool, to see Andy. She began her preparation. Mrs. Malony gave her an old blue bonnet, the priest's housekeeper a pair of his reverence's cast-off shoes; her own red shirt and black cape 'ud do well enough. She put up two dozen fresh eggs in a small basket, strung the key of her door round her neck, and with a few shillings in her pocket set off for Carlingford, where she embarked in a herring-boat for Liverpool.

She was desperately sea-sick during the voyage, and arrived in the great sea-port more dead than alive.

By showing to different people the address on the letter she had received from her brother, she made out his residence without much difficulty. He and his family had just sat down to a breakfast of rashers and tea, as his sister appeared at the kitchen door, and a woe-begone figure she presented, with her bonnet to one side, and her hair blown about her face and neck.

"Who's that, William?" inquired Mrs. Rafferty, as if startled.

Her husband's face grew positively black, as he rushed forward to greet Peg with, "What the h—l brought you

here?" Andy was approaching with a smile of welcome, when his father shouted: "Stay where yi are yi gomaril. Follow me," he said, addressing his frightened visitor.

"Id better lave the eggs here," said Peg, setting down the basket, then casting one loving look at the "chile" she'd come so far to see, she went out with her brother, who called a cab and ordered her to get in.

In about half an hour, they drew up opposite a huge building. Rafferty directed Peg to stay where she was till he'd come back. He ran up a flight of steps, and after a short colloquy with some person at the entrance door, returned and told his sister to get out and come along.

When admitted to the building, she was shown into a large, bare room, where she was left alone.

"What can be the manin' iv this at all at all?" she asked herself, looking round the gloomy apartment, wondering if she was in jail.

By this time, she had recovered from the effects of her seasickness enough to smooth her hair and arrange her bonnet.

In about an hour, a gentleman entered. Peg rose, and dropped him a curtsy. He questioned her. She told her story simply and coherently. Plainly she was not insane. When the doctor informed her she had been brought to a lunatic asylum by her brother, she clasped her hands and exclaimed: "God forgive him; he was al'ays cruel."

"He's a scoundrel," said the doctor, "and ought to be severely punished. Don't delay in Liverpool. I'll send a boy with you to the quay, where you will find a boat going to Warrenpoint." He gave her a couple of shillings, and she left, accompanied by the guide, who led her outside the high-walled enclosure to the main road. Here, some boys laid hold of him, and began a series of whispering questions relative to his charge. Peg, terrified to the heart lest they'd take her for a madwoman, pressed on as fast as she could walk. However, the lads weren't to be baffled, they'd have some stolen fun at her expense; so followed after, to jostle, pluck, and grin, in the hope of exciting their victim to give chase. No good, all they could elicit was, "Och! childre', lave me alone." At length she found herself in one of the great

thoroughfares, where the roar of the traffic was simply bewildering. Not knowing in what direction to turn—the guide had abandoned her—she asked one passer-by after another if this was the way to the Warrenpoint packet. In most cases—"Nothing for you to-day," came before she got farther than: "If yi plase, sir—"

"What'll become o' me?" she asked herself in utter despondency. The young hooligans were still in evidence, up to this the game hadn't been worth the candle. They would make a final effort, so two of them, joining hands, ran against her with such force she fell heavily on the pavement, from which she was pulled up by a policeman, who shook her roughly, and asked why she couldn't look where she was going.

Peg, the colour of death, told where she wanted to get. A crowd began to gather. A handsome young man, touched at sight of her pallid face, tear-stained cheeks, and trembling lips, said gently: "I'll take you to the Warrenpoint packet."

He hailed a cab, held the door open till she got in, and then seated himself. On the way he heard her story.

He saw her aboard, and ordered her a bowl of tea. Didn't she bless him from a full heart, and who wouldn't say "Amen" to her blessing.

After a weary journey by sea and land, Peg reached home. Heartsore and footsore, she lay down on her pallet, and slept the sleep of sheer exhaustion. But as she had to work to live, the next day saw her afield, reaping-hook in hand. The golden grain that fell beneath her sickle made a not unfitting emblem of the ruthless cutting down of her hopes. Andy's presence had been the one touch of Paradise in her life. In a worldly sense, she was desolate and poor; but she shared one prerogative with the great and mighty of the earth—she could pray—and is it not to be supposed her uplifted hands pleaded all the more powerfully because those hands were so coarse and hard.

EARLY LOVE TROUBLES.

CHAPTER I.

I WAS born in the North of Ireland, and when seventeen years, of age fell deeply in love with a young girl I met every Sunday; as she and I were going to our respective places of religious worship—she to a Presbyterian Meeting House, I to a Catholic Chapel.

My fair enslaver was a graceful girl, with a brilliant complexion, dark eyes and hair; I was a tall, lanky youth; able to display an incipient moustache—of which I was inordinately proud.

In a little while, my feelings reached that ebullient stage, in which silence is no longer possible, and it becomes absolutely necessary to let off steam; so, in the privacy of a lumber room, in my father house, I indited my first love letter.

The nervous agitation I experienced interfered with the elegance of my penmanship, to such an extent that I spoiled a dozen sheets of note-paper, and as many envelopes, before I could attain the amount of perfection necessary for so important an occasion.

At length the missive was finished, with many prodigious flourishes; but when signed and sealed, I was confronted with the difficulty of getting it delivered,

If sent by post, it would run the risk of falling into the wrong hands. The mother of my adored was a stern, puritanical woman, whose "clear-the-way" stride gave me the idea of her being a formidable person to deal with. Father and brothers were able-bodied Orangemen—"True blues," and sectarian animosity ran so high in our part of the country, it would have been regarded as rank heresy for a Presbyterian maiden and a Catholic youth to fall in love with each other. The maiden would probably have been locked up—the youth have had his bones broken by her irate relatives. These were the days when, as has been often said, people "hated each other for the love of God."

In this dilemma, I remembered an old beggar woman, named Peggy Green, who laid every house in the parish

under contribution. Peggy, though a professional gossip, could, I thought, keep a secret. She had a knowing expression, and was supposed to be too astute to spread malevolent stories. On the contrary, she had on several occasions—much to her own profit—been the means of reconciling parties at variance.

Peggy was a tall, thin woman of seventy, to whom I often gave a penny. She called me “deerie,” and described the symptoms of her ailments to me with a minuteness of detail that would have charmed the heart of a physician.

She had one child—a pretty girl—who had unfortunately acquired a shady reputation. This damsel was generally at service, in one or other of the provincial towns; however, at the period with which I am concerned, she was out of employment and staying at home with her mother.

The morning after I had written my letter I stationed myself in sight of Mrs. Green’s cabin, to watch for her egress. I had not long to wait. About ten o’clock, the old lady appeared, and, after closing her door, began her tramp at a brisk pace. Indeed, I hadn’t thought she could walk so fast.

“Good morning, Peggy,” I said, overtaking her.

“Augh! good mornin’, ‘deerie,’ is it yirselt, I see? I’ll hev luck this day afther meetin’ you.”

“But, you didn’t meet me. Why, I had to run to overtake you. To see you walk, one would think you were only twenty.”

“Aw, now, Masther Charlie, yir takin’ a han’ out iv me. Howanever, I’m glad ti see yi. Yir lucky—an’ there’s sich a thing as lucky people an’ lucky bastes. Yistherday, the first thing I met—”

“Peggy,” I interrupted, “will you do me a service?”

“A sarvice! That I will. I’d go ti the en’ iv the worl’! ti sarve ye, an’ yi ought ti’ know that.”

“I don’t want you to go quite so far. Will you give a letter from me to a young lady?”

“Who is it?” inquired the crone, fixing her keen eyes on my face.

“Miss Stevenson,” I replied, colouring.

“Miss Annie Stevenson, on the hill?”

“Yes.”

Peggy gave an oblique look, punched me playfully with the head of her stick, and then exclaimed:—"Is that the way with yi, yi rogue iv the worl'? Well, nivir fear. It's meself i'll be yir 'go-between'. Where'll I find yi, to let yi know the come-out iv me arn?"

"If you bring me an answer, I'll give you a shilling. Leave this letter to-day, and say you'll call back for a reply. Do you see that gate? Well, to-morrow afternoon, about four o'clock, you'll find me there."

"I'll do me best, an' the king himself cud do no more. As yi see, I'm just goin' out on me stravogue; only I hed a wee dwam, I'd hev bin on the road an hour ago. I want ti kech his Riverince, afore he goes to the Station iv confessions in Kerik Chapel. He gives me sixpence a month, an' this is payday."

"Very well, then, I won't detain you.—Here are a few coppers—all I have about me."

"Good luck ti yi. It's meself 'ill not putt a spoke in yir wheel."

Peggy gave me another punch with her stick, and a look that was very comical.

When we parted, I had a misgiving as to the wisdom of my proceeding. The levity of the old woman's manner was a revelation, and it struck me her daughter's lightness of character was a maternal inheritance.

CHAPTER II.

Next day, at the appointed hour, I found my emissary sitting on the step of a stile; close to the gate at which we had agreed to meet. She was out of breath, and so overcome, she could just raise her hands, to let them fall heavily on her knees.

I stood staring at her in mute bewilderment; fearing her errand had been discovered, and that she had been chased for her life.

She looked at me pathetically; and kept shaking her head mournfully from side to side. At length, after emitting a succession of groans that could be heard at a distance, she said:

"Och, deerie, I'm affher hevin' the biggest fright I iver hed. It hes tuk ten years frum me life, ay ten years, iv a day. The Stevensons hev a dog—the most tarriblist baste in the whole counthry. He's as big as a calf, an' he hates the poor as much as himself down there." Peggy tapped the ground with her stick, to indicate the abode of that formidable personage of whom we have all heard. "They mostly keep him chained; but the day as ill luck 'ud hev it, he was rovin' about, seekin' who he'd devore. Soon as he spies me, doitherin' up ti' the house, he comes tearin' down the walk, barkin' like a bull, an' his two eyes like two coals iv fire. I thought he'd tear me limb from limb, and lave me scathered about—a bit here an' a bit there—an' so he wud, only Miss Annie darted down affther him, an' chased him back into the yard."

The reaction from my suspense was so great, I burst into a laugh I could not control for some minutes, and every time I looked at my messenger, my laughter was renewed.

Peggy regained her composure immediately. There was a gleam of fun in her eye as she looked at me, and said: "Listen to the kinks iv him. There now, he's aff again. An' if that big baste hed his way with me, who'd hev' brought yi this, I'd like ti know?"

She drew a letter from her breast, and I became sobered in an instant.

"Is this from Miss Stevenson?"

"I shudn't give it ti yi, affther the way yi've laughed at me."

"Why, Peggy, you frightened me nearly as much as the dog frightened you. I thought Miss Stevenson's father had found you out, and chased you for your life."

"No, nor twinty like him wudn't fine me out. Here's yir letther, an' much good may it do yi. It wus the dear arn ti me."

"I'm sorry, Peggy"—here I began to laugh once more.

The old woman shook her stick at me, though it was easy to see she herself was amused. She gave me the letter. I was impatient to see the nature of Miss Stevenson's reply.

The writing was scratchy, the spelling bad; but the paper was pink and perfumed; and the contents equalled the contents of my own in ardour.

Looking back now, I distinctly say I have no words to describe the elation I experienced on reading that letter. Surely, first love must be a madness of the heart—a madness that fills life with the sweetest illusions. How true it is that:

“In love’s spring all good seems possible.”

I was transported to a region where everything looked rose-colour; where trials seemed trifles, and annoyances of all kinds mere bagatelles. Did I not possess the love of the girl I loved? What a glorious secret to lock in my bosom! No wonder I began to assume a top-loftiness that could not pass unobserved.

A few days after my newly-found happiness, Betty, our maid of all work, said:

“Masther Charlie, what hes come over yi iv late?”

“Why do you ask, Betty?” I replied, smiling down at her.

“Yir kerried away lukin’, somehow—wan ’ud think yi wur a bit daft.”

“Ah, Betty,” I said, “there are more things in the world than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”

“Faix, I’m nayther sleepin’ nor dhramin’; me eyes are wide open; an’ I see afore me. As ti that thing yi’ve mentioned, I don’t know what you mane.”

“Not know what I mean by philosophy? Oh, Betty,” I exclaimed, laughing, “your education has been sadly neglected.”

“Man, dear,” she replied, “yir just ready to jump out iv yir skin, about somethin’ or t’other.”

My mother began to remark I was the only one of her family “there was satisfaction in asking to do a thing;” so she closed her eyes to the fairness of a division of labour, and began to load the willing horse to death. All her commissions, and little odd jobs, fell to my share. I saw this; but didn’t mind. Buoyed up by happiness, I ran, I flew. Love lent wings to my feet. When I passed my charmer on Sundays, she looked conscious and turned away her head. I walked on—a smile of imbecile vanity stealing over my face.

I had written five letters, and all but the last had been punctually answered. In this, last I had vehemently urged a

love-tryst in a little nook at the end of a bog—the most secluded spot of which I could think.

Peggy, who had received her fee as regularly as I received a letter, informed me I must wait a couple of days, as Miss Annie's mother was beginning to suspect something.

At the end of three days, I decided to pay a secret visit to Mrs. Green's cabin, which was situate on the side of an old road. About nine o'clock at night, I softly approached Peggy's dwelling, bent on giving her a pleasant surprise. The door was open, probably to let out the smoke. I heard the sound of laughter as I drew near. A quantity of straw, littered about, enabled me to step in quite noiselessly, and my presence was screened by a wooden partition, called a "jamb wall," that ran half way across the floor—between the fire-place and the door.

I looked through a chink in the boards, and, Oh! horror, of horrors! There sat Peggy Green's daughter, my last impassioned epistle open in her hand. It was the outpourings of my heart that had provoked their laughter. Yes, there she sat, beside a small table on which were placed a tallow candle, a pen and ink, and a sheet of pink paper!

"Hurry, Annie machree, and write the answer," said the arch deceiver, who sat with her heels in the ashes and her back towards the partition.

"What'll yi say if he fines yi out?" replied the young lady.

"Sarra a fear iv he's finin' me out. She wudn't luk at the side iv the road he's on, an', iv she did, her father 'ud skin her alive fur commarcin' with wan that's not iv her own sorte. She's more on fur skytin' about with the dochtor's young man then fur courtin' Charlie Dogherty. Sure, whin I fetched her his first letther, she'd har'ly touch it, whin she hard who it wus from. 'Is it that gawk?' sis she. 'I think,' sis she, 'he's not all there,' an' she tapped her forehead with her fingers. 'Twus only be coaxin' an' palaverin' an' tellin' lies I got her to read the letther, an' whin she read it, she laughed till yi cud hev' tied her with a sthraw. 'He's very imperent,' sis she. 'Take this letther back ti him, an' say I want none iv his stuff.' Begin the writin' like a good girsha. Iv I hed a couple of shillin's more, I'd stap

the business. Use big words, like not 'notwithstaninn' or, as the quality says, 'notwithstanding.' The old dame pronounced the word with a twang that would have caused me to laugh heartily on any other occasion.

I had heard and seen enough. The noise of some carts passing enabled me to make my escape without attracting attention.

My sensations are not to be described. I was so stunned, I could have been knocked down by a feather. Never did a more crestfallen creature crawl to his home. It was, as if some cruel hand had caught me by the back of the neck, and flung me out of a garden of Paradise, among thorns and brambles. — The light of my life was extinguished with appalling suddenness, and I felt a dull apathy stealing over me.

On reaching home, I repaired to the "everyday" room, where I found my father, mother, and two of my sisters.

My father was reading a newspaper, my mother was knitting, and the two girls were sewing.

I flung myself wearily on a chair, and began to stare into the fire. Chancing to look up, I saw my father had ceased to read, and was looking at me over his glasses.

"I hope, boy," he said severely, "you haven't been smoking!"

Smoking! Good heavens! What an insinuation to make to one suffering from the pangs of unrequited love!

My mother's attention was immediately arrested. "Charlie, you're looking very ill. You must have your feet bathed in mustard and water, and take a dose of oil, or salts."

"I'm not sick, mother," I replied, with an impatient shrug.

"Now, don't gainsay me, dear. You know my remedies for keeping the doctor out of the house. A foot-bath, a dose, and a day in bed, at the first sign of an attack."

"You will do what you're told, sir," said my father in a peremptory tone.

I rose, and left the room, saying I'd go to bed.

John, my eldest brother, shared a double bedded room with me. He had already retired for the night, and I thought he was asleep when I went up. My prayers were short, and

I got into bed, hoping my mother would think no more of the remedies by which she kept out the doctor.

Alas! no such thing! My head was hardly on the pillow, when she entered, carrying a nauseous dose, and accompanied by Biddy, with the foot-pan.

Protestations were of no avail. I was to swallow the oil while she'd count five. So she began „one—two—that's the boy—three—four—ah! you're me own big son—five. It's down. Come, now, and I'll bathe your feet.”

I declined the offer, and promised to attend to her instructions. I sat on the side of my bed, and plunged my feet in the water.

My mother and Biddy withdrew. The latter remarked I looked as if I'd seen a ghost.

Just as the door closed, the thought of Peggy Green's treachery so overwhelmed me that I said aloud, with all the vehemence I could muster, “The oul divill! I'd like to dip her in a flax hole.”

The words were hardly out of my mouth, when I saw a long figure in a night-shirt squaring in front of me. “Do you mean my mother?” it said.

“No,” I replied, with infinite scorn. “I don't mean your mother. For goodness' sake, go back to bed, and don't excite yourself.”

John went back to bed, and, raising his head above the blankets, said: “Has the carrier-pigeon broken her wing?”

Then he laughed, till the bed shook under him. He evidently divined, in part, the true state of the case; and the fact, of my having been dosed for an affair of the heart struck him as comical in the extreme.

Poor John! In less than a month after, he was in his grave. He was taken from us by a few days' illness—taken at a time when family affections were at their height, before separation had begun, or self-interest cooled, home-love. Bitter and salt were our tears, fond and warm the kisses imprinted on his dear, dead face.

His hearty laugh on the night of which I speak was an antidote to my morbid feeling. It appealed to my reason. Why should I be miserable about a girl to whom I had never

spoken. Ah! but who ever healed a wound by reasoning? However, as I've said, John's laugh did me good. It helped to rally my forces. Miss Stevenson's contempt was a spur to endeavour. I'd study harder than ever, pass my exam., and then —

I fell asleep, and dreamed I was flying over hedges and ditches, pursued by a demon in the guise of Peggy Green.

I felt it was wiser not to let my "go-between" know I had found her out. If the thing got wind, I'd be the laughing stock of the neighbourhood, and there were people who would clap the old deceiver on the back, and protest she had done "a mighty cliver thing." So, all sides considered, it would be best to "let sleeping dogs lie."

On the day following my discovery, I sauntered leisurely to the place of meeting. Peggy was there, with a most lugubrious expression of countenance.

"Och, Masther Charlie, I thought yo'd nivir come. I'm here this hour an' more. This is the letther, an' I wish, deerie, yi'd get some wan else fur a 'go-between'; yi see it disn't shute me ti be seen skulkin' about the same place so often."

"I won't trouble you again, Peggy," I replied, taking the missive and paying the shilling. I'm not in Miss Stevenson's good graces. There is another person she favours more."

"Aw! di yi tell me that! The tory—the tory iv the worl'? An' wus she dasavin' yi all the time?"

"Peggy," I replied, very gravely, "I entrusted to you a secret, and I hope you'll keep it."

"Lions an' tigers wudn't tear it out iv me. Yi may be sartin, sure I'll keep it."

"Very well—good evening" I turned away, and never spoke to her again.

I believed her to be thoroughly unprincipled, and that she had acted discreetly through life from no higher motive than policy. I have often speculated on what such a character would have been in a different sphere, and the images conjured up by my speculations are not pleasant to contemplate.

The innocent, the trustful, and the good would have been her victims. So bland without, few would have discovered she was so bitter within.

MISS KESSINGHAM.

(MUSIC TEACHER.)

"CHARLOTTE, darling, won't you have a nice hot cake for tea this afternoon? I'll ask Miss Robinson and Miss Denvir to stay."

"Certainly, Aunt. Do you expect Miss Robinson's brother?"

"Well, you know, he generally comes to take his sister home—quite likely he'll be here."

Charlotte's face clouded, and she hurried out of the room without another word. Her aunt went to the piano, began turning over some music,—smiling to herself all the time.

A knock at the front door announced an arrival.—It was Miss Olive Robinson, who, after divesting herself of hat and jacket in the hall, entered the pretty sitting-room in which Miss Kessingham awaited her.—She was a fat, red-faced girl of nineteen, execrably dressed, and one who had acquired something of that patronising manner the illiterate rich evince towards women who work for their bread.

"Good afternoon, Miss Kessingham, I hope you're very well."

"Thank you, Miss Robinson. I hope you have practised since your last lesson."

"Ah! now, Miss Kessingham, you must be easy."

"You won't improve if you don't practise.—Indeed, you only waste time in taking lessons at all."

"I hate music, it's a botheration, but I don't like, when I'm at a party, not to be able to play like the rest."

"You'll never play if you don't take more pains...."

The lesson began.—It was the fifth time for the same piece, and the girl's attempt was still wretched.

On coming to the end, she let her hands fall on her lap and exclaimed: "Oh, Miss Kessingham, I'd give the world to play like you without the trouble of learning.—Bob's just daft about your music." Then, lowering her voice and looking her teacher straight in the face, she said: "He'll be here this afternoon to see me home, by the way—that's his excuse, but I know better."

She laughed, without withdrawing her eyes from the lady's

face, as if something she saw amused her. Clearly, this coarse girl not only knew her painstaking instructress had a vulnerable spot, but knew where it lay, and it pleased her to probe it, for at the mention of Bob's name Miss Kessingham's pale cheeks became rose-colour.—She was a slim woman, of middle height, with a delicate skin, deep-set, blue eyes, a rather wide, smiling mouth, and a profusion of fine mouse-coloured hair.—The music teacher was what she looked, a gentle, guileless, unsophisticated creature, with a strangely unsuspecting nature; so modest and reserved, that up to the time of which I speak, her intimate friends had never discovered she was exceedingly susceptible to the tender passion.—More than one image had been enshrined in her innocent heart, where the sacred flame had invariably burned itself out for want of the fuel it demands.

An old Scotchwoman once accounted for her spinsterhood by saying: "I wud nae tak the walkers, an' the riders gaed by."

Miss Kessingham hadn't had representatives of either class from which to select. The "walkers" didn't aspire to her hand, and the 'riders' never thought of her at all.—She was now touching forty, had scaled the hills of youth, and begun her descent on the other side without ever having received an offer of marriage. However, she was fated to fall in love once more. Olive Robinson's brother, Bob, a fresh-looking, flaxen-haired specimen of great physical development, became the object of her too susceptible affection.

Robinson was six-feet-two, and made in proportion.—He had small cunning eyes, and a brutal mouth, concealed by a heavy, fair moustache. Mr. Bob was the son of a wealthy farmer, and had selected horse-dealing as an occupation.—It was his fine appearance on horseback that had set poor Miss Kessingham's heart aflame, and caused her to blush to the roots of her hair every time she heard his name mentioned.

This tell-tale habit opened Miss Olive's eyes to the real state of the case, and she lost no time in imparting her suspicion to Tillie Denvir—a prospective sister-in-law, and another of Miss Kessingham's music pupils.

It was generally known in the locality that Miss Denvir, the only child of a rich grocer, would have a large fortune,

so with the approval of the parents on both sides, she became engaged to Robinson. The young people wished to keep the relationship in which they stood to each other strictly private for a time, so as not to spoil fun. They were innately coarse-fibred. If they could amuse themselves they didn't mind whom they hurt. Thus, it was settled, Bob would play off the gentle, kindly, music-teacher for the amusement of himself and friends.

Miss Kessingham, her niece and the two privileged pupils had begun tea when Robinson arrived, well-dressed and looking handsome.

No mistaking the pleasure his coming gave his hostess.—She beamed with delight, and the cad purposely detained her delicate hand so long, his sister and fiancée began to giggle.—To further amuse them, he addressed the lady as Miss *Kissinghim*.

This caused Charlotte to exclaim: "Oh! Mr. Robinson, how stupid of you, to mispronounce aunt's name."

"Do you object to 'Kissing-him'?" he replied, making a brilliant effort to appear witty.

"I object to vulgarity in any form," she flashed, looking round at the three perfect specimens of that quality her simple-minded aunt was entertaining.

Robinson, having taken his seat, fixed his eyes so steadily on Miss Kessingham, that she became confused, and poured the cream into the sugar basin. At this mishap, the pupils exploded, and actually shook with laughter, the assumed gravity of the gentleman's face adding to their merriment.—Charlotte sat pale and silent, while her aunt smiled complacently at the hilarity of her guests, never dreaming their amusement was entirely at her own expense.

After tea Charlotte, cleared the table, and her aunt sat down at the piano. Her music fell on inattentive ears; no sooner had her niece left the room with the tea-things, than Mr. Robinson began a series of pantomimic gestures, so entertaining to his sister and his fiancée, that the former cried out on Charlotte's re-appearance, "Oh! Miss Lefroy, Bob's too funny for anything."

The young girl smiled, and looking at Robinson, said

blandly, "I think you've mistaken your vocation—you should have donned a cap and bells."

The sarcasm cut home.—The fellow grew sulky, and shortly after, told his sister to make ready. It was time they were off.

On saying good-bye, Bob pressed Miss Kessingham's hand and received a gentle pressure in return, of which he spoke with infinite gusto when outside.

"Oh, Bob!" exclaimed his sister, "you're a regular lady-killer, women are daft about you."

"What do you say to that?" he inquired, addressing the girl he intended to marry—solely for her money.

For answer, she pressed her cheek against the sleeve of his coat, and said: "How dare that old thing think of you! But, good gracious! I forgot, to this minute;—mother told me to invite her and her niece to-morrow evening for tea."

"The niece is an impudent baggage," said Robinson. "I'd like to see her get a cooling."

"Run back, Tillie," said his sister. "We'll have more fun with old Kessingham and Bob."

"Will you wait here for me, then?"

"Of course—run."

Miss Denvir returned to the cottage and delivered the invitation, which was accepted.

As pleasure owes much of its zest to anticipation, it may be supposed the three friends made merry over the treat in store for them on the following afternoon.

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Thirty years prior to the opening of this story, Miss Kessingham's father arrived in C—a thriving town on the north coast of Ulster, to fill the post of organist in an Episcopal church.—Report credited him with being a gentleman of fallen fortune, who, under pressure of adverse circumstances, was turning his great musical ability to account.

Mr Kessingham was a widower with two little girls.

The wonder soon was that a man of such exceptional musical ability should bury himself in C—; where, however, he had more engagements than he could well attend to, and was able to get more pupils than he could conveniently take. For ten years, debts, which he honourably discharged, swal-

lowed up a large portion of his income; but, by the time his daughters were grown up, he was able to purchase a beautiful cottage that stood just outside the town, with windows opening on a smooth lawn that sloped down to a babbling brook, over which a row of lime trees spread their broad branches protectingly. The cottage was artistically furnished, and as the owner was a man of refined taste, the place was kept in excellent order.

Charlotte, the elder of the two girls, married a Dr. Lefroy, who shortly after procured an appointment in a merchant vessel bound for Rio. His wife didn't accompany him. On the return voyage, the ship was wrecked and all on board perished.

Poor Mrs Lefroy sank beneath this crushing blow. In time, she gave birth to a daughter, and died a few hours after her baby was born. Apart from the sorrow caused by this great bereavement, Mr. Kessingham had for many years a peaceful, contented, and on the whole prosperous, life.

His grand-daughter grew up into a fine, healthy girl, with a happy temperament, a clear head and a loving heart.

His daughter, Amy, the subject of this sketch, was by no means brilliant; but her father took the greatest pains to instruct her thoroughly in the accomplishment by which she could support herself, if ever thrown on her own resources. At the same time, he hoped to be spared long enough to leave his dear ones above the necessity of earning their daily bread. This was not to be. His death, after a prolonged illness, obliged his children to take to music-teaching as a means of livelihood.

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Bob Robinson would be at the Denvirs' and of course Miss Kessingham wished to look her best. When her toilette was completed, she turned to Charlotte with: "Do I please you, dear?"

"Indeed, Aunt, I don't know when I saw you look so well."

"I'm glad you think so, little woman. I've a very particular reason for wishing to look well."

She took her niece's face between her hands and kissed her fondly.

"I hate that fellow, Robinson," said Charlotte.

"Naughty girl, to hate any one. I'm sure Mr. Robinson is an honourable, upright man."

"Oh, Aunt! You're an idealist—you invest people with imaginary perfections, and think you love them, when in fact you are loving the too flattering image that exists in your own generous mind."

"I've always given myself credit for great penetration," replied her aunt, smiling.

"Did your penetration equal your goodness of heart?—I know some people with whom you'd take care not to be on intimate terms."

"Little cynic!—Be quick, pet, 'tis time to go."

The two ladies stepped out into the gloaming.—A lovely harvest moon looked down on them through the lime trees, and cast a silver sheen on the little brook that went on, hurry-scurry, like an earnest creature, bent on one thing only.

They were startled to observe a figure seated on the garden chair placed opposite one of the windows.

"'Tis mad Anne," whispered Charlotte.—"What can have brought her back, after so lengthened an absence?"

"I've a strange dread of that woman.—I'd die if I met her alone," replied her aunt.

The mad woman rose, and approached them.—She was tall and strongly made—owing to exposure, her bare arms and feet had the hue of raw flesh. The gleam of lunacy shone from beneath her heavy black eyebrows. Her snow-white hair was thick, and grew low on her forehead. She wore a gown of spotless, white calico, over which she had tied an apron of coarse blue linen.

The superstitious regarded her with awe, maintained she had the evil eye, that she was a bird of ill-omen, and that disaster followed her footsteps.

"What brought you here, Anne?" inquired Charlotte.

"I followed the ravens. They were flyin' over you house all day."

Miss Kessingham offered her sixpence, which she accepted with apparent indifference.—"They say yir coortin' Robinson's big son, an' that he's laughin' at yi."

"Don't mind what they say, Anne," said Charlotte. "Aunt, dear, hurry, or we'll be late."

Her aunt's face had grown scarlet, and she appeared abstracted all the way.

On reaching Denvirs' house they found the hall-door wide open, and heard peals of laughter proceed from the parlour, the door of which was close to the front entrance. Some adverse Fate seemed to hold the aunt and niece from knocking. Clearly and distinctly, Olive Robinson was heard to say: "Oh, Mrs Denvir, if you only saw old Kessingham when Bob fixes his eyes on her. She smiles and she blushes, she looks this way and that way.—Yesterday afternoon, she poured the cream into the sugar basin.—Just watch this evening, when Bob plays her off."

"The best of the fun," exclaimed Mr. Bob, "is the squeezing of hands. I squeeze hers, then she squeezes mine."

"She'll throw herself into your arms some day, if you don't mind," said Mrs. Denvir, as soon as she could speak for laughing.

"I'll take care she'll do no such thing, I'd as soon hug..."

There was a cry, and a heavy fall. Mrs. Denvir rushed out. What has happened—what's this? What's the matter with Miss Kessingham?"

"She has fainted from the shock of over-hearing your gross insults.—Get me some water please," exclaimed Charlotte furiously.

"Bob! come here," cried Mrs. Denvir, "and carry Miss Kessingham into the parlour."

At these words, Charlotte sprang up like a flame, Robinson had reached the door. "Back, you base coward!" she exclaimed. "Did you touch Miss Kessingham, I'd strike you—you and your coarse companions are responsible for what has happened."

At this stage, Mr. Denvir entered the hall. "Yes," continued the excited girl, "we've come to your house, invited guests, for the purpose of being turned to ridicule and made game of."

"I deeply regret the daughter of Mr Kessingham has been insulted under my roof," he said in reply.

Charlotte, who was on her knees, supporting her aunt's head, asked him to assist in carrying Miss Kessingham to a couch. He at once lifted the insensible woman in his arms, and stretched her on a sofa in the parlour, where the delinquents stood in a group, like so many whipped curs.

The ordinary means for restoring consciousness having failed, Charlotte begged Mr. Denvir to bring a doctor. He left at once for that purpose.

An exclamation of alarm from Mrs. Denvir caused everyone in the room to look towards the window. There stood mad Anne—her face glued to the pane—talking gibberish about the ravens.

"She comes for no good," observed Mrs. Denvir, whose face had grown quite pallid.

Miss Kessingham just then opened her eyes—gazed wildly round, and seeing her niece, said: "Where am I, Charlotte?"

"Here, with me, Aunt, darling—here with me. You fainted, and Mr Denvir kindly brought you here."

Miss Kessingham gazed at her niece in a dazed sort of way, then her eyes rested on Mrs. Denvir. She shuddered, as if recollection had come back, and starting up on the sofa, flung her arms round Charlotte, calling out:

"Hide me, hide me—I hear them. Do you hear what they say? Don't let them be near me, Charlotte."

"Oh, Aunt! Aunt! This is dreadful," cried the sobbing girl, while hot tears fell down like rain.

When the doctor came and inquired the cause of the patient's excitement, Charlotte told everything that had occurred. The physician looked pained and said:

"The shock of disillusion, to one of her delicate organisation, may have serious consequences." Turning to Mrs. Denvir he continued. "I've known this lady for many years, and wonder at any one selecting such as she for ridicule. Robinson has acted the part of a brutal cad; were I a young man, he wouldn't escape a sound thrashing."

Addressing Charlotte, he said: "Miss Lefroy, my brougham's at the door. I'll drive you and your aunt home."

He wrote a prescription, which he begged Mr. Denvir to get filled and sent to Miss Kessingham's cottage.

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In after life, Charlotte Lefroy often said, the memory of the night that followed would never leave her mind.

The sedative prescribed didn't take effect, her aunt's excitement increased, till towards morning, when she became quiet from exhaustion.

Charlotte utterly fatigued fell asleep in an easy-chair, into which she had dropped for a momentary rest. On awakening, her aunt was nowhere to be seen.

The frantic girl rushed wildly from the house, not knowing which way to turn. It was six o'clock. A labouring man she knew was passing to his work.

"Oh, Peter," she cried, "Aunt is very ill, her mind is quite unsettled, and she got away when, unfortunately, I fell asleep. Help me to look for her."

"I saw two women in a field beyond there—one of them I took to be 'mad Anne'. They say she's back."

"Come with me, as fast as your feet can carry you. Something dreadful may happen." She flew like the wind. There was a cold breeze, and the fallen leaves were whirling about in all directions.

At last the fugitive was overtaken. She and the mad-woman were standing on the brink of the "Black Pool"—a dark stretch of water, bordered by sedges and bulrushes, that were swaying backwards and forwards with a sad, monotonous dirge.

On seeing Charlotte, the frenzied creature let fall a shower of stones she had in the skirt of her tucked-up dress, and clung to Anne, who said: "She wants to drown herself."

Charlotte, seeing the preference her poor, demented aunt showed for the being she had formerly so dreaded, enlisted the mad woman's aid to get her back to the house.

The lunatic was equal to the emergency, she nodded to the others, and began to humour her sister in distress.

"Come, honey, I'll show yi a place where yi can drown yourself far betther then here."

"You'll help me into the dark water—they won't find me.—Ah: there they come—Miss Robinson and her brother. Hide me! hide me!" She cowered under the mad woman's arm.

"Why, Miss Lefroy," said the man named Peter, "this is

terrible—terrible.” He regarded Charlotte with a look full of compassion.

She followed her aunt in a state of unimaginable distress.

When the cottage was reached, Dr. Fleming was found to be already there. He made arrangements for the afflicted women to be conveyed to the nearest lunatic asylum.

On a lovely morning, in the April following this catastrophe, Miss Denvir and Mr. Bob Robinson plighted their troth in the church where Mr. Kessingham had been organist for many years.

The wedding party was large and merry. No thought of Miss Kessingham’s fate intruded itself, to mar the joy of the happy pair; though they and all their friends were aware the poor lady had died in the asylum on the previous day, and that her remains would be brought to C— for interment in her father’s grave.

The day was so delightfully fine, that, after the wedding breakfast, it was decided to go for a drive.

About two miles from the town the party saw “mad Anne” standing on the top of a fence, as if looking out for something she expected. Soon a black object became visible to the bridal pair, who were well in advance of their guests.

“Damn it,” muttered the bridegroom, “this is unlucky. I wish I could turn.”

“Don’t make an old woman of yourself,” replied the bride. “What harm can a funeral do you?”

The mad-woman darted forward, shook her clenched hand at Robinson, and shouted: “Ha, me boy, she’s comin’ fur yi! She’s comin’ fur yi. Ha ha! She’s comin’ fur yi.”

“Be off! ye hag of the devil,” he roared, and made to strike her with his whip. He then lashed the horses so furiously the spirited animals started off at high speed.

On came the hearse, with its nodding plumes, followed by a long cortège of respectable people, whose sympathies had been deeply stirred by the sad fate of the deceased.

The bridegroom’s horses plunged and reared.—He felt that for once he had lost mastery over them. They became perfectly unmanageable as the hearse was about to pass; and

with one bound lifted the light conveyance off the road, flinging their driver head-foremost, against the wheel of the hearse that was bearing the remains of the gentle music-teacher to their last resting place.

When the appalled onlookers lifted Robinson from where he had been thrown, life was found to be extinct.

The bride lay stunned and insensible, on the opposite side of the road, both arms fractured.

In a few minutes, a day of rejoicing was turned to a day of mourning, and the party that had set out brimful of mirth returned steeped in gloom.

THE "CHARMS" OF MRS. O'SHEE.

"MRS. MILLIGAN, my housekeeper, has taken so suddenly and so seriously ill, the doctor has sent her to hospital. Do you know of anyone who would take her place for about a week? My work here is nearly finished, and I don't think it worth while to change my quarters for the short time that remains."

"Well, really, Mr. Hannigan, at the present moment I can't think of any person; but I'll send Bridget to you. 'Tis possible she may know of someone who would suit."

Bridget was Mrs. Milligan's maid-of-all-work. When she came to the parlour, I said: "Bridget, poor Mrs. Quinlan has had to go to the hospital: do you know of anyone who would housekeep for me for about a week?"

"Well, sir, there's Mrs. O'Shay; she's a quate, dasant widda wumman, honest as the day, an' I think she would shute you."

"But I should't want her to shoot me," I replied, unable to let the funny pronunciation pass.

"Well, now, that's surprisin'," observed Bridget reflectively; "for what use would she be, if she didn't shute you?"

"Where is she to be seen?"

"I cud hev her here, sir, at iny hour ye mintion."

"I am to dine in the hotel at one o'clock, and will call on my way to dinner." With these words, I hurried off.

[I had some engineering work, connected with a bridge that spanned a river close to a much frequented seaside resort in Ireland. As, during the winter months, many furnished houses were to be had for a song, I rented one, in preference to lodgings, and had the good luck to secure the services of a capable housekeeper, whose regrettable illness obliged me to look out for a substitute. Mrs. Milligan, who lived in the same terrace, was my landlady, and I was quite at home in her house.]

On calling again at No. 15, I found the candidate for my vacant post awaiting me in the parlour, with Mrs. Milligan, who was sewing.

"Mrs. O'Shee has been here some time, Mr. Hannigan."

"O'Sheel" I repeated in an aside. "Bridget said, O'Shay."

"Oh, it is the same name correctly pronounced."

I saw at a glance that, as far as appearance went, Mrs. O'Shee fully satisfied the conventions, as a fit and proper person to take up residence in the house of a lone bachelor. She was between fifty and sixty, her figure podgy, her features lumpish, her small green-grey, or grey-green, eyes so keen that, when she looked at me, I felt as if pierced by gimlets.

"Mrs. O'Shee," I queried, "are you willing to undertake the post of housekeeper for a short time?"

"I'm willin', if ye think I'd shute you."

"You can cook, of course?"

Let me hev, the combustibles, and I'll manage—you wouldn't be wantin' figgérities, I suppose?"

By figgérities, I thought she meant foreign dishes, and replied: "Certainly not—a milk pudding or a pie—something simple. Are you a good hand at soup?"

"I've made that desecrated soup, sometimes—if ye like it."

"I must say, I dont like desecrated soup," I replied, much amused.

"Mrs. O'Shee," said my landlady, laughing heartily, "remember, Mr. Hannigan is an Englishman, and the English are much harder to please about their meals than we Irish."

"I'll do the best I can, ma'am, an' the best can do no more. I'll keep his place safe, an' hisself too."

Heavens above! Had I only known what she meant by keeping me safe. If I had—well—for one thing—this story would never have been written.

"All right, Mrs. O'Shee. Here is the key of No. 7. Light a fire in the kitchen and one in the front bedroom. You will see that the house needs to be put in order. Au revoir, Mrs. Milligan. I'll be with you in the evening."

"Yes, we expect you—don't disappoint us."

In the afternoon, I went to number 7; and filled up my spare time in collecting all the clothes for which I had no further use, and throwing them in a heap on the floor. Be it noted that among these discarded habiliments was a pair of old riding-breeches. When I had thus disposed of what

underwear and overwear I no longer needed, I summoned my new housekeeper, and, pointing to the heap, said:

"You see these things, Mrs. O'Shee, I have no further use for them. Take them away, and do what you like with them."

"That's a great lot to dispossess yourself ev, sure enough—I'll distribute thim among the indignant iv the place with the greatest acrimony."

Mrs. O'Shee had picked up a copious vocabulary, which she misapplied with a vengeance! Wishing further comical misapplications I asked: "Have you been long a widow?"

"Two years. Himself died iv information iv the loins. He's buried in the seminary above there."

Having thus delivered herself, she walked off, carrying an armful of clothes, with very evident satisfaction.

I laughed, when alone, and anticipated the merriment I should cause in Mrs. Milligan's by a repetition of my new housekeeper's blunders.

.
Next morning, on sitting down to breakfast, I found the meal wasn't edible—so overdone were the rashers and eggs. The tea, too, had a strange flavour. I rang the bell, and when Mrs. O'Shee appeared in answer to the summons said: "I can't possibly breakfast on cinders and corks!"

"An' who'd be afther axin' ye ti emancipate cindhers an' corks? I put soda in the tay ti make it go far, an' cooked the eggs an' bacon to me own taste."

"Have you never heard, Mrs. O'Shee, that one man's food is another man's poison?"

I couldn't feel long angry with one who had given me some hearty laughs. "See here," I said, "is there a good fire in the kitchen?"

"Yis," she replied, looking very crestfallen.

"Come then, and I'll show you how I should like my rashers and eggs cooked. Throw that stuff out of the teapot and infuse fresh tea."

"Mr. Frank Milligan will be here for tea and supper," I remarked, after I had breakfasted.

"There'll be two iv thim," she observed.

I looked at her questioningly.

"I see thim in the tay-cup," she said.

"Then, you divine by tea-leaves?"

"There's many a thin' can be prognosticated by tay-laves." So, if not skilled in cookery, Mrs. O'Shee was skilled in the occult.

"Mr. Hannigan, cud ye oblige me wid a couple iv antelopes? I hev' pen an' ink an' paper, but sorra an antelope."

This request was made as I was leaving the house. I couldn't do less than hand her a package of envelopes

Just as Frank Milligan and I were at tea that evening, Fred Scott, another friend, arrived, so Mrs. O'Shee's prediction was verified. Between anecdotes of misprints, mispronunciations, and words wrongly applied, we laughed till we cried—thanks to my new housekeeper, whose vocabulary set us on this train of story-telling.

When the worthy woman had cleared away the tea-things' she came in to say: "I hev' bin sent fur, an' suppose I can go out. Yis 'on't be wantin' anythin' ti ate fur the nixt couple iv hours, an' Mrs. Harley, in Peg's lane, hes a supplicatin' leg she wishes me ti administher to."

"All right, Mrs. O'Shee. You can go. It wouldn't do to neglect a supplicating leg."

On the afternoon of the following day, I returned from my work, feeling rather acute pains in my legs, probably from having stood too long on a marshy piece of ground. I had been invited to an impromptu dance; to go was out of the question; so I had sent an apology, and decided to remain indoors. I knew I'd have no visitors, as all the fellows of my acquaintance would be at the house to which I had been invited.

When the housekeeper brought in my tea, I remarked, casually: "I've got devilish sharp pains in my legs."

"In what part?" she inquired, with keen professional interest.

"Oh, all the way down."

"H'm, h'm! We'll see what can be done."

She spoke in an undertone, as if communing with herself.

I retired early, and on going to my bedroom noticed a slight, unusual smell. After sniffing two or three times, I came to the conclusion that a bit of rag had fallen among the coal;

so troubled no further about the matter, and got into bed, feeling, I must say, very stiff in the joints.

About two o'clock in the morning, I awoke - to find the bed abnormally hot, the room stifling with smoke, and a strong smell of burning! I leapt to the floor, saw a red glare under the bed, believed the parlour beneath was on fire, and that flames were making their way to the room in which I stood. With this idea uppermost, I seized a handbell, threw up the window, and bellowed: "Fire! fire! fire! fire! fire!" with all my might and main, ringing the bell as an accompaniment to my shouts.

In less time than it takes me to tell it, the occupants of the houses on both sides of mine were out of doors.

"This house is on fire," I shouted to them. "Send for the firemen."

As I was hastily getting into my trousers, I saw a light under the door and through the keyhole, that led me to suppose the stairs were enveloped in flames, and escape that way impracticable.

Had I no thought for the safety of my servant? Yes; but I knew her bedroom was off the kitchen, and the fire was at my end of the dwelling. I intended to rush to her rescue as soon as I got out of danger, and was about to call for a ladder to enable me to go out by the window, when the door opened softly, and Mrs. O'Shee, carrying a candle, entered with the utmost composure! She had a black petticoat round her shoulders, and a red handkerchief tied on her head - the ends of the knot that tied it standing out like horns.

"How did you get here, and the house on fire?" I asked, in utter astonishment.

"Mebbe," she replied, with an idiotic smile, "it's yir breeches that's burnin'!" *

Had she become stark, staring mad? Had I a lunatic to deal with in my awful dilemma? I looked at her in speechless amazement.

"Is the pains away?" she asked, quietly.

"How can I think of pains, and the house burning?" I vociferated.

"Iv ye hed thim, ye'd think iv thim," she replied, with the greatest coolness.

* See Note on page 113.

She then placed the candlestick on the floor, went to the bed, and drew from under, a tin sponge-bath, in which my old riding-breeches lay red and smouldering, emitting volumes of smoke! The "charm" by which I was to be cured!

The next performance was to take the ewer, pour water into the bath, which was then pushed under the bed. Having done this, Madam O'Shee picked up the candlestick, and said: "Yir all right now," and walked off without any sign of concern.

I was paralysed, and, for a moment or two, incapable of action. However, the increasing noise outside broke the spell. I had to face people needlessly alarmed, and must bear the brunt of their displeasure. It was moonlight, and fortunately the weather was fine, for a crowd of half-dressed men, women, and children were trembling outside in dread of developments.

Mr. Wibly, a writer—my next-door neighbour to the left—stood beside a stack of MSS., rejected ones, I knew, for he had told me that in consequence of the decline of good literature, he couldn't get anything accepted. On the doorstep, to the right, I saw the tall, angular figure of Miss M'Nab, hugging the huge black cat that had been the bane of poor Mrs. Quinlan's life. "It wusn't wan divil was in him," she used to say, "but tin."

I hardly knew my own voice, when I made the following announcement:—

"Ladies and gentlemen, I am glad to say the fire has been extinguished. There is now no danger whatever. The alarm was premature, and I much regret your having been disturbed."

Before I concluded, my audience had vanished as if by magic.

I then called out to some loiterers who didn't belong to the terracc. "Five shillings to whoever prevents the fire brigade from turning out."—There was a stampede!

I closed the window, and sat down on the side of my bed to reflect.—The horror of hearing the fire-engine thundering down filled me with sickening suspense! To think of the trouble that had been occasioned by the freak of a ridiculous old woman! But, astonishing to tell, the pains were gone! I was clear of them! Cured by the shock, I suppose.

Thank Heaven, the fire-engine didn't come, and I went back

to bed. Then the comical aspect of the affair presented itself to my mind in full force, and I laughed till the bed shook. Alas! my laughter was of a short duration. I received a blow on the side of the head that caused me to leap from the bed with an imprecation, crawl on all fours to the dressing-table, strike a match, light a candle, seize my gun, and call to the murderous burglar to show himself!

There wasn't a sound! I started on a tour of inspection; shook the curtains, peeped under the bed, looked for a trace of footmarks. Absolutely no sign of any intruder! Here was a case which would defy Sherlock Holmes to unravel! I had been struck a heavy blow, with an iron weapon, in a room where was no one but myself! The door was closed: I had turned the key in the lock, the dread of seeing Mrs. O'Shee again in her night-gear being too much for my nerves. Had anyone tried to open the door to get away, I should have heard, my senses being all on the alert. No one tried: the door was still locked. I opened it, and looked into the passage, my gun ready for active service. The passage was long, so I fired at the far end—as a warning. I next raised the window and discharged a second shot into the air. Whereupon there began the most violent thumping on the wall from the Miss M'Nab's side of my house, followed by loud knocking at the hall-door.

Mrs. O'Shee was again on her feet. I heard her demanding "Who's there?"

Mr. Wibley's voice replied: "Shots have just been fired in this house. Go to your master's room, and see if there be anything wrong with him.—I fear something serious has happened."

I knew I should be again confronted with Mrs. O'Shee, so braced myself for the occasion.

She came. "In the name iv God," she said, "what are yi up to? Put down that carnivorous waypon; they think ye hev' committed shoe'cide an' that yi're walloppin' in yir blood."

"There are burglars in the house," I affirmed: "I was struck a heavy blow on the side of the head."

"Sarra a bugglar; mebbe it wus the nightmare yi hed." With these words she put her head out of the window and called to the dignified Mr. Wibley—"He's as right as a fiddle. Go back to yir bed."

"If Mr. Hannigan has taken to playing off practical jokes on the community, he'll hear more about it," replied the gentleman in an angry voice.

Miss M'Nab was still relieving her over-charged feelings by vigorous thumps on the wall.

It was an Albert bedstead, and I saw Mrs. O'Shee looking up at the canopy, then down at the bolster.

"It must ha' bin this," she said, holding up the largest and heaviest horseshoe I had even seen.

"Of course it was that," I replied. "What brought the the thing here?"

"I sthrung it up fur good luck, an' ti keep ye safe. That shoe belonged ti me gran'father, on the mother's side, an' I wudn't lose it fur iny compromise. I thought I'd fixed it more secure. It's fallin' seems quare."

"Mrs. O'Shee," I began gravely, "why don't you give warning of this in——." I was going to say "infernally nonsense", but checked myself—"this sort of thing?"

"An' not be let practise—be people as hev no undherstan'in'! I'd like to see meself. I'll take the shoe wid me—there 'ud be no use in lavin' it."

She withdrew, and I confess, my language became unprintable! I returned to bed, feeling that in a very literal sense, I was being victimised by the "charms" of my house-keeper.

Next morning, I sat down to breakfast, in a subdued frame of mind. Miss M'Nab's black cat was on the window sill. I shook my fist, at it and made a face; but it just winked at me, and leered in a knowing sort of way, as much as to say: "My boy, don't think to intimidate me, after the exhibition you've made of yourself." The black brute settled itself in a more comfortable position, continuing to stare, and to wear that sardonic smile—I fancied so at least; but then, when the imagination is powerful, 'tis easy to convince one's self of the truth of almost anything.

I heard voices at the hall-door.

"He's at his bit; but I'll tell him," Mrs. O'Shee said.

"Misther Hannigan," she exclaimed, on entering the breakfast-room, "there's a number iv scally-wags at the front doore;

yappin' like corncrakes fur five shillin's they say ye promised thim."

"I'll attend to them in a few minutes," I replied, without looking up.

I found five or six disreputable-looking fellows awaiting me, each protesting it was he, and no one else, had earned the five shillings.

"The only thing I can do," I explained, "is to give a shilling to each." All but one agreed to this arrangement. I concluded that the objector was the right man, so when I had disbursed a shilling each to the others, I handed him five. I had, it must be noted, taken a hint from King Solomon's famous decision.

"Now, Mrs. O'Shee, you see what your 'charms' have cost me."

"Bedad, thin, if ye'd bin confined ti bed wid newmatics, an' a docthor attendin' ye iv'ry day, it 'ud cost ye more."

Like many another in the world, my interesting housekeeper had the faculty of setting herself in the right, no matter how things turned out.

Feeling certain I had unwittingly attained an unenviable notoriety, I left the house with a hang-dog air that was unmistakable.

On passing Mrs. Milligan's, I saw Bridget polishing the knocker, and halted to say: "Bridget, Mrs. O'Shee is a most extraordinary person."

"She's a 'wise woman', sir."

"Wise? You surely wouldn't have recommended her, had she been a fool?"

"Yis; but she's wiser than wise. She dales in 'charms', an' people come from far an' near to consult wid her."

"Last night she left an old pair of my breeches burning under the bed, and I thought the house was on fire."

"Ye'd pains in yir legs, sir?"

"Yes."

"An', are ye cured?"

"Well, yes: the pains are gone."

"Oh, she's mighty clivir: she cures bastes iv all descriptions."

"Really!" and I moved on.

About midday, two policeman called at my office to say that complaints had been made, to the effect that I was amusing myself at the expense of my neighbours, and had caused serious disturbances.

I protested I had never been more in earnest in my life. There had been no practical joking whatever, and then foolishly launched into a detailed account of the night's proceedings—not in the least sparing myself.

The officers said they were glad they had thought of interviewing me, and went away laughing.

On going to the hotel for dinner, I saw I was the observed of all observers—was looked at, nudged at, smiled at, in the way the black cat had smiled in the morning. This came from being among a people noted for a keen sense of the ludicrous. It occurred to me, the best thing to do was to join in the laugh against myself; so I entered into the joke with seeming gusto, and found great relief in doing so. To join in the laugh against one's self helps to take the sting out of being laughed at.

That evening a number of my chums called, and we made merry over the result of Mrs. O'Shee's "charm." I was informed that Jimmy the Rhymer had got hold of the facts, and composed a ballad he intended to sing in the streets; that a representative of "The Eagle" had been looking for "copy", and that, in short, the whole town was shaking its sides with laughter. I summoned Mrs. O'Shee, and told her the town was laughing over the burning of my breeches.

"Mebbe it'll soon laugh wid the other side of its mouth," she replied. Then, fixing me with her gimlets—"An' whose fault is it? Iv ye'd hil yir tongue, sarra a sowl wud ha' known anythin'; but yi hed ti blab to thim contemporaneous polis. How cud I know that a taste iv smoke wud make yi putt yir head out iv the winday, an' skirl like a say-lion?" With these words she left the room.

Next day she asked if "I had an oul' silk hankerchief I cud give her?"

I made her a present of one much the worse for wear, saying: "May I ask if you want this handkerchief for any unusual purpose?"

"Well, thin, since yi ax me, I'll jist till yi sthrait. I want it for a black cow that has got a compendium in her hine quarter, an' the craythur lets fly her heels in the most terriblist manner ivir seen. I'll instruct the parson that owns her ti rub her down wid the silk an' thin make a knot iv it on her tail."

This was the last "charm" of Mrs. O'Shee that came to my knowledge. I returned to Liverpool on Saturday, my work completed to the satisfaction of all concerned. On parting with the woman "who was wiser than wise", she held my hand in a cordial grasp, assured me if I ever came back to "oul' Irelan' she'd keep house for me, an' that she'd allays enthertain fur me the greatest animosity."

NOTE TO PAGE 107. According to a superstition existing in some parts of Ireland, a man can be cured of pains in his legs by the burning of his trousers, under the bed on which he sleeps. To render the charm effective, the patient must be in complete ignorance of its application to himself.

DR. LISTON'S ENTANGLEMENT.

CHAPTER I

"PHIL, you couldn't do better than marry Miss Bowmer; she's plainly caught, and McBride says she's worth her weight in gold."

"Then, why doesn't he go in for her himself?"

"Well, you see, he's already engaged; besides, this Australian woman is his cousin, and he doesn't approve of relations marrying; says the children of the same blood are generally weak in intelligence and often insane."

Philip smiled.—"What age is Miss Bowmer?"

"Twenty-eight—at least, that's what he says."

"Twenty-eight!" echoed a young girl, who was listening attentively, "say forty-eight, and you'll be nearer the mark."

"Tut, tut, Alice! you're too severe. I, myself, would take the lady to be about thirty-five—an age when women are at their best."

Philip exploded,—"Listen to our philosopher.—Pray, Frank, when did you add the study of the fair sex to your curriculum?"

"I feel the strength of my insight, Phil. There's not a fellow in the north of Ireland knows more about the sex than I do; my penetration is never at fault, I can form a correct estimate of any woman that comes across me."

"Frank," interposed his sister, "you're the most preposterous fellow in existence.—Have you discovered that Miss Bowmer paints, powders, and dyes? Do you think those beautiful teeth, she's so fond of displaying, aren't false?"

"Alice, Alice," remonstrated a handsome, middle-aged woman, who sat sewing in an embrasure of the window, "'tis not in good taste—nay, 'tis unwomanly to take our kind acquaintance to pieces in that way; pray be more careful of what you say."

"Mother, Frank would exasperate a saint! You heard him suggest, Phil should marry that Australian woman on account of the wealth she's said to possess."

"My dear, a suggestion is far from being an accomplished

fact; you're as much in earnest as if the event were actually about to take place."

"It would be a terrible misfortune," resumed Frank ironically, "for a fellow to marry a kindly woman with three thousand a year! It would be an awful catastrophe, if Phil could send Harry to the army—Gladys to school, and be able to afford you and mother, now and again, the price of new gowns."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Alice, rising, and facing her mercenary brother, who also stood up. "Do you really mean what you say? Is Phil to sacrifice himself out and out for the good of the family? Why, when he wishes to marry, he will, without an effort, be able to get the loveliest and richest girl in the country—you needn't stop your ears, Phil. Frank, permit me to inform you that I'm giving Gladys the benefit of all the learning I possess; and let me remind you, Harry is but seventeen—time enough to talk of his entering the army—at present he is very well off in having a clever country school-master to teach him. Your thinking that mother and myself would wear frocks bought with this Australian's money proves you are *not* able to form a correct estimate of the women who cross your path.—I hadn't thought you were so mean."

"Not so fast, Miss—you always go off at half-cock. There's no question of meanness in the matter.—Phil would give as good as he'd get—He's destined to be an ornament to his profession." A peal of laughter from Phil, in which he was joined by his mother, caused the sapient youth to pause for a moment, then, with a bland smile he went on to say: "Miss Bowmer would not only be the wife of a distinguished medical man, she would be the niece-in-law of Sir Richard Liston, twelfth Baron of Bootville."

"Ah, hold your tongue! I've no patience with you; you claim relationship to a man who wouldn't recognise you,—who treated your father as if he were a disgrace.—For shame! What proof have you, Miss Bowmer has three thousand a year? Don't you know McBride's jealous of Phil, and hates us Listons?"

"I know he's a spiteful man, and bears us no good will;

but, if his cousin entered our family it would give him a lift, and—”

“Frank!” exclaimed his sister, “you’re positively silly; pride of birth has made you idiotic. Mother,” she continued, “how is it your second son is so bereft of common-sense?”

“Have you not heard, Alice, that common-sense is most uncommon?” replied Mrs Liston, smiling.

“I’m the most practical man in the family,” protested Frank.

“You’ll certainly be very successful in life,” said Alice, “if self-laudation be a help to climb the ladder of fame.”

“And if I didn’t praise myself, who else would do it? Permit me to ask, Miss Alice, if Phil has taken you into his confidence? Are you acquainted with his real sentiments, as regards this very interesting person?”

“Bosh! I know his taste.”

“And so do I. Three cheers for Miss Bowmer?” and the provoking young fellow waved an imaginary cap in the air.

“Frank, you’re a wicked boy, you are doing your very best to provoke Alice,” said his mother.

Phil, the subject of this altercation, stood with his back to the mantelpiece, a highly amused expression on his handsome countenance. He was a tall, finely formed young man, with clean-shaven face, and a beautiful, intellectual head, covered with short, black curls. Alice believed that if pagan deities were still worshipped Phil, would pass for a veritable son of the gods. She idolized him, he was her hero of romance; however, it was not his physical perfection endeared him to her and the rest of his family, it was the tender, protective element in his nature—the knowledge he studied the welfare of its members more than he studied his own.—He was twenty-seven years of age, but looked older, owing to the gravity of his manner.

“Alice,” he inquired, “how long is it since you had a new gown?”

“Eighteen months, and my health’s not the least impaired by the fact.—You must admit, I never look shabby; thanks to mother’s skilful fingers, and my own into the bargain.”

"I used to think it took a great deal of money to enable women to dress nicely," he replied.

"Yes, women who don't know how to manage."

"You're a conceited little chit, Alice," interposed Frank, "and your accusing me of self-laudation is a case of Satan reproving sin."

"You call me little! I'm five feet five—the perfect height for a woman—*merci!* there's a knock at the door!"

"Miss Bowmer, by George!" exclaimed Frank, as he threw up an end window and dropped into the garden. Alice, too, made off, saying she "must get tea." Next minute, the lady who had been the subject of such hot discussion was ushered into the presence of Mrs Liston and her eldest son.

Miss Bowmer had returned from Australia about six months prior to the time with which this story is concerned. In person, she was rather tall, very slight, had a smooth skin, small black eyes, a long upper lip and a well-shaped nose.—By dint of skilful manipulation in paint and other cosmetics, she managed to look almost handsome, and would have been so called by a casual observer.

Her naturally sinister expression was concealed by a perennial smile, when in the presence of those whose favour she wished to gain. Alice described her as being, "all grimace and wriggling solicitude to please."—Her manner to Mrs Liston was a mixture of admiration and gush—she assumed a shy coyness when addressing Philip.

"I'm delighted to see you, my dear Mrs Liston"—kissing her hostess—"I so hope you don't find this hot weather oppressive."

"On the contrary, I'm never so well as in warm weather; in short, I'm a sun-worshipper, and often go to the garden for a bath in his rays."

"Indeed, then, Queensland would suit you,—don't you think so, Dr Liston?"

"Really, Miss Bowmer, I don't quite know what to say. I fancy even my mother would find too much of her beloved sun in that part of the world. May I ask, was Queensland the part of Australia in which you lived?"

"No, my home was in Sydney; but I once spent a few

months in Brisbane." "I've been reading a most appalling account of the late drought in—"

Here Alice entered, followed by a neat maid with a tea-tray, and after the usual greetings to their visitor, asked, "What drought, Phil?"

"The drought in Queensland."

At this point Frank re-entered.

"How do you do, Mr Frank? I hope you're enjoying your holidays?"

"Very much, thank you. I regret to say, this is my last day, I go back to Belfast to-morrow."

"Yes," interposed Alice, "Frank's squabbling-days and mine are nearly over, aren't they, Frank?"

"They are, thank goodness. I've been thinking that before I leave, I'd better set up a stick with a cap on it to keep you going—"

And as a substitute for you, ha, ha, ha!" laughed his irrepressible sister.

"Really, Alice, you forget yourself.—Miss Bowmer, pray excuse my daughter's want of manners."

"I envy Miss Liston's high spirits," said the lady with a sigh.

"Mumsy, I'll be good," chimed in the delinquent

"Have you been to Belfast, Miss Bowmer?" queried Philip, by way of changing the conversation.

"Only for a few days, on my way here.—It's a very fine town."

"Yes, it proves what can be done by industry and enterprise; its people may well be proud of their splendid warehouses and fine streets."

"I like to do business in Belfast," said Mrs Liston, "the shop-assistants are so polite and obliging."

"Next time you visit our northern capital, Miss Bowmer," said Frank, "I'll be able to take you round."

"Thank you, Mr Frank, I won't forget your obliging offer."

The talk then became general, till Miss Bowmer rose to go. Philip offered to see her to her lodgings—she was about to make a call on her cousin, Dr. McBride. He went with her so far, and at parting received an unmistakable pressure

of the hand, which—together with Frank's hints—caused him to feel rather queer.

Dr. McBride, a thin man of medium height, with a flat head and a cadaverous face, was at his consulting-room window when his cousin and Philip came up to his door.

As soon as Miss Bowmer entered, he wheeled round with, "I see you've had the honour of that snob's escort."

"I've had that honour," she replied, unbuttoning her gloves.

"If you're worth your salt, you'll nab him; he may be Sir Philip some day.—I hear his uncle is not in the best of health."

"You pay me a great compliment when you insinuate I could make the conquest of such a rara-avis as your rival, Dr Liston."

"Seriously; have you ever hypnotized anyone?"

"Not one, alone, several. I have a magnetic eye,—you know."

"Try its power on Liston; I've told his brother, you have three thousand a year, and that you were just twenty-eight last Christmas."

"You've given me a helping hand, certainly—mineral qualities compensate for age and the want of good looks.—I fear the consequences of deceiving a man of Liston's stamp would be very unpleasant."

"Devil take him, if he'd put the noose round his neck solely to get command of your cash.—How I'd laugh at his disappointment." He laughed in anticipation.

"Suppose it turned out, this widow, to whom you are engaged, in place of having eight thousand, hadn't a penny, how would you act?"

"Chuck her up!"

"But if you had married her before finding out?"

"I'd make it hot for her,—maybe send her to the kingdom-come; but there's no fear."

"If doctors were criminals, they could do a world of harm."

"Ay, knowledge is power; in particular, knowledge of the human anatomy. Do you really think you can lure Liston into your toils, and take him out of this. I've been here

seven years—he but two, and he has almost left me without a patient.”

“When you get a case, why not protract the cure to increase the pay?”

“Yes, and have him called in to effect the cure.—Be hanged to him!”

“Hanging wouldn’t be much worse than marrying me under the impression I’d three thousand a year, when I haven’t five hundred pounds I can call my own; but let me tell you, John, if some of my plans had succeeded, I’d have had the sum you mention and more.”

“You were up to many a trick, I’m sure; but the best trick you ever played would be to get that swashbuckler to marry you. If the Baronet dies without issue, he can’t be kept out of the title and estates.”

“When I was staying with Aunt Jane at the Baronet’s place, she told me Sir Richard was engaged to Miss Bellgrove, a girl of twenty. He’s forty-eight, but when a man’s so handsome, disparity of age doesn’t much matter.”

“No, you women would go to the dickens for handsome men.—His nephew should satisfy your requirements in that respect. Isn’t he an Adonis? Hasn’t he turned the head of every girl in the place? As to the uncle,—bad health’ll won’t put all idea of marriage out of his head. I’ve had a letter from that old sniveller, Aunt Jane, ’tis a prolonged wail about the change that has come over Sir Richard.—The Listons here are as poor as church-mice, and a marriage with you would seem a god-send.”

“Why! I’d be worse off than I am at present, and if the young man didn’t fall into the property, what advantage could you derive from my marriage?”

“It would do me good to see the fellow taken in.” He rubbed his palms with a fiendish chuckle.—“How do you like the rest of the family?”

“I detest that Alice.—They seem wonderfully bright and contented to be as poor as you say.”

“Oh, they entertain romantic ideas of each other, suffice for themselves and, cultivate nobody. I don’t know how you’ve managed to get in among them. It gives you all the

better chance of winning the doctor. I've set the ball rolling, and if you play your game well, you may be Lady Philip."

"What's your price, in case I succeed?"

"A thousand pounds, and introduction to the set in which you'd move."

The worthy pair soon after separated; Miss Bowmer to her rooms in a pretty cottage outside the little town; Dr McBride to visit the widow he was to marry, when her late husband would be sufficiently cold in the clay.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN Major Liston was only a lieutenant, and little more than a boy in years, he went on a visit to a brother officer in Tyrone. Here he saw, loved, and wedded the beautiful daughter of a poor country doctor. His father, who had settled, he should marry an heiress—the daughter of a bosom friend—was enraged at what he considered a *mésalliance*, vowed he would never see his son again and remained implacable to the end.—The young lieutenant sailed with his regiment to India, taking with him his lovely girl-bride. Henceforth he had had to depend solely on his pay.

He soon rose to the rank of major, but unfortunately, death closed his career at the early age of thirty-three,—leaving a widow with three sons and two daughters to bewail his loss. Mrs Liston and her bereaved children returned to the home of her girlhood. Her father's circumstances had improved, and he did all in his power to succour and solace the widow and her family. He destined her eldest son for the medical profession; apprenticed the second boy to an engineer in Belfast, and sent Alice to Victoria College, where her educational advantages were of a high order.—The two youngest were taught at home.

The good man died in the very month of the year his grandson, Philip, had become fully qualified to practise.—He had saved no money, for the support and education of his daughter's family had compelled him to live up to all he earned. His means of livelihood hadn't depended so much on private practice as on the salaries, derived from

a couple of appointments he luckily secured some time prior to the death of his son-in-law. Of these appointments Philip stood no chance, so it was finally decided the family had better migrate to Craighbroney—a pretty seaside resort of the middle class, on the north coast of Ulster—where rent was moderate, and the necessities of life abnormally cheap.

Their uncle, who knew nothing about them, lived in the south of England; nor was Miss Bowmer aware of their existence till she came to Craighbroney to have a “peep at her cousin and former school-mate, Dr McBride.” The attractions of the place, she said, induced her to defer an intended visit to Glasgow, and to take lodgings for the summer months. For this change of plan, Philip Liston was unconsciously responsible; the fashionable Australian had taken a violent fancy to the handsome young doctor, whose praise was on everybody’s lips.—When informed by McBride that he was the nephew of the man in whose residence an aunt, with whom she had been staying, was housekeeper, she proceeded to lay her plans with the practised cunning of a born schemer. The Listons never spoke of their connections, and the cousin-confederates had reasons for concealing their knowledge. Miss Bowmer speedily recognised a formidable opponent in Alice. Indeed, the keenness of this young girl’s perception bordered on clairvoyance; she read the intriguer like a book, and saw a grinning skeleton behind the painted cheeks and fatuous smile, with which she hoped to captivate her much-loved brother.

“The truth bites sair.” Alice was conscious of a lurking fear, the poverty of her family might favour Miss Bowmer’s views.—It was this fear caused her to rise in arms at the bare suggestion of Philip’s marrying “that woman.” Though the exigencies of his family nailed him for a time to a spot where there was no chance of attaining professional eminence, she believed the future held a bright destiny in store for this highly estimable young man.

Things must improve when she would procure the position of governess,—for which she was privately seeking—and when, in a year or so, Frank would be in position to afford some aid.

Dr. Liston couldn’t help becoming conscious that in Miss

Bowmer's feeling for him there was more than friendship. He never doubted her being as rich as was reported, and thought, a wealthy woman who'd marry a fellow without a penny, gave the greatest proof of disinterested affection it was in her power to give.—He once heard a college chum say, he would marry the ugliest woman in the world if she had three thousand a year. Well, Miss Bowmer had that much, and she wasn't ugly at all; no one need mind Alice, she was so prejudiced. True, till Frank broached the subject, he had never, for a moment, regarded her in the light of a prospective wife, nor would he now if he had only himself to think about. His sweet and gentle mother had hard lines, many a fellow had made a greater sacrifice for loved ones than he would make by marrying Miss Bowmer. Then he would wince at the idea of binding himself for life, to one who would, perhaps, prove a most uncongenial companion.—His cogitation ended with the resolve to cultivate "that woman," and if liking succeeded indifference, to ask her to marry him. Well, his sister couldn't *hear* his thoughts.

One day, Alice Liston burst into her mother's sitting-room with, "I'm after meeting 'that woman' and Phil out walking." She flung herself, flushed and angry-looking, into a chair opposite where Mrs. Liston sat.

"What woman?"

"That painted Jezebel from Australia! If Phil marry her, I'll kill myself."

"Oh, Alice, what an undisciplined tongue you've got! Do measure your words, my child, or they'll get you into trouble. Miss Bowmer has done you no harm; she's a nice person, and has been very kind to me."

"Ay, kindness with a hook! She knows that attention to you is the surest road to Phil's good will."

"He's not thinking of marrying, he only shows a little polite attention to a stranger who has made his mother so many pretty presents."

"Sh'es a trickster, and the Fate that would conspire to unite her to my darling brother is a traitress to worth.—I know she's in love with him."

"How can you tell?"

"I'm well versed in the symptoms; at sixteen I was madly in love with a man to whom I have never spoken a word."

"You dreadful girl!" exclaimed Mrs Liston, laughing in spite of herself.

"Please, Mother, read this letter.—I advertised in the Irish Times and have got an offer I wish to accept. Fifty pounds a year and only two pupils! I'll send three pounds a month to you, and reserve the balance for 'duds'."

"Glanalpin Park! Why, that's in the vicinity of your father's home, and Bellgrove was the name of the lady my husband was wanted to marry! How strange! How very strange!"

"Then," said Alice, with an arch smile, "I may see our ancestral trees and, perhaps, get a glimpse of the family portraits."

Mrs Liston's eyes became suffused with tears, and she said sadly "Your dear father suffered much for marrying me."

No, Mother," exclaimed the warm-hearted girl, flinging her arms round Mrs. Liston's neck, and kissing the tears out of her eyes, "you are worth all he lost, a million, million times! Bah! what about wealth,—"better a dinner of herbs with love, than a stalled ox with hatred.' Haven't we been happy in our poverty? Haven't we laughed at our efforts to appear genteel? Haven't we had splendid health—the best of blessings? Cheer up, Mother, the worst is over; I've a presentiment, this situation is the beginning of a change of fortune, and we'll all do our best to make you happy."

Soon, Mrs. Liston's emotions subsided, and she observed: "I see you are expected to arrive on the tenth of July; by what route do you think of going?"

"By the boat that leaves Dublin for Bristol, thence to Annesley, the nearest station to Glenalpin Park."

"You will need a new dress, dear."

"No, Mother, please don't speak of such a thing. Thanks to your clever manipulation of old gowns, I'm well enough off for a governess."

"I shall miss you greatly."

"Mother, it would be sad if you didn't; I pity the girl who wouldn't be missed, or whose presence isn't desired by her own family."

Philip entered, and a glance told him his mother had been in tears.

"Show that letter, dear, to Phil."

Alice held it out with evident reluctance. Her brother read the contents, threw the letter on the table, and without a word turned to the window.

It was the first time Alice had taken a step without consulting him, and he didn't relish the idea of his sister going out to earn her bread.

CHAPTER III.

On the tenth of July, Miss Bellgrove drove to Annsley railway station, in a pony phaeton, to meet the new governess. She found her walking up and down the platform, waiting for the promised conveyance.

The young lady appeared sincerely sorry for being late, and apologised with so much grace and kindness, Alice felt certain she would like her.

The first going from home is very trying to a sensitive nature, and Alice, notwithstanding her obstreperous ways among her own people, was keenly sensitive to manner,—but then, who isn't?

A week saw her installed as first favourite in the Bellgrove household. Her frank, fearless nature, her perfect ease and freedom from self-consciousness, made a favourable impression. She, on her side, was charmed with her pupils—two dear little girls, aged respectively eleven and nine,—she congratulated herself heartily on her good luck.

One evening, about a month after her arrival, she and Florence Bellgrove, the eldest of the family, went into the park for a stroll and a confidential chat.

"Miss Liston, you haven't yet been told of my engagement."

"No, are you really engaged? May I ask to whom?"

"To Sir Richard Liston."

"You don't say so!" Alice stood still, to stare at her interlocutrice.

"I do say so," smiling. "Do you know Sir Richard? By-the way, you're a namesake."

"Hadn't he an only brother?"

"Yes, a scapegrace! He was to have married Aunt Kate, father's eldest sister; but he chose a nobody instead. He must be dead; I never heard if he had a family."

"Miss Bellgrove, Sir Richard's brother was no scapegrace, he was the best and bravest of men, his wife the noblest of women!"

"Do you know them?"

"I speak of my father and mother."

"Good gracious! You don't say so?"

It was now Miss Bellgrove's turn to stand and stare at her companion.—It never struck me.—Well, this is truly astounding! Pray, tell me everything, I'm deeply interested."

Alice very willingly gave a sketch of her family history up to the day she left home. Miss Bowmer occupied too large and too unpleasant a place in her thoughts to be left out of her recital.

"Miss Bowmer!" ejaculated Florence, "why, Mrs. Ferrin, Sir Richard's housekeeper, has a niece of that name, lately returned from Australia, and supposed to be very wealthy; I've seen her several times; she dresses fashionably, and is rather well-looking. I don't think it's true about her means, for when that was mentioned to her aunt, she just laughed and shook her head."

"I never believed in her wealth, and I took an unaccountable dislike to her personally.—Dear me! one revelation after another, will there be any more?"

"Alice, this evening has marked an epoch in our lives.—We were so far, and yet so near, without knowing it."

"You will respect my confidence."

"Most certainly. You will, however, permit me to acquaint my parents with this extraordinary information."

"Yes, I suppose I must—you will enjoin secrecy."

"Have no fear on that score.—We shall keep silent until we have your permission to speak."

"My father never received a shilling of his portion; he couldn't legally claim it, and scorned to solicit a favour. Your fiancé doesn't even know of our existence."

"'Tis too bad.—If I don't err, the old Baronet applied most of your father's portion to the erection of a church."

Alice laughed sarcastically. "How very pious he was! What a model Christian! The Gospel tells us to forgive even our enemies; he wouldn't forgive his son, which shows there's no hatred so bitter as the hatred of our own flesh and blood; nor is there any so vile."

"Sir Richard and his father must have been grossly misinformed."

"That wouldn't excuse his father. Had his son been wild and wayward, had he been, as you were led to suppose, a scapegrace, he'd have stood all the more in need of a parent's care and solicitude. My father was cast adrift from kith and kin, as if he'd been a moral leper; all because he refused to sacrifice the love of his brave young heart on the altar of worldly ambition. You can't blame me if I entertain no friendly feeling for the man you are about to marry.—There must be a vein of cruelty in the nature of one who could be so implacable—so indifferent to the fate of a brother."

"You're justified, Alice, in all you say. The treatment meted out to your father was shamefully harsh,—I didn't think Sir Richard could be so callous."

"Do you love him?"

"I've always liked him, and found his society agreeable; but I'm not in love. My parents have set their hearts on the match, and it pleases me to please them. I'll do all in my power to make the Baronet a dutiful wife, and I'm certain he'll make me an excellent husband."

"Well, I wish you every happiness. When is the interesting event to take place?"

"In October, if by that time Sir Richard will have recovered his health; he hasn't been so well lately, and his medical advisers have ordered him to Norway for a change."

"Strange he didn't marry earlier in life!"

"He was about to be married twenty years ago, but the girl died."

A silence of some minutes ensued. "It just strikes me," said Florence, "you might like to see a portrait of your father, taken in his youth. It's in the gallery at Liston Hall. If you wish, I'll drive you there to-morrow."

"I thank you from my heart, I should wish it of all things."

Before the two girls went to sleep that night, Florence was, in a manner, acquainted with each member of Alice Liston's family, and plans for reconciliation began to germinate in the fertile brain of the amiable girl.

The following day, she and their young governess set out in a pony trap for the Baronet's residence, about four miles away.

As soon as they were seated, Florence asked: "Do you know the new rector at Craighbroney?"

"I heard him preach, the Sunday before I left. He has only just come to the place."

"His wife is related to mother. I've a long standing invitation to visit them, which your disclosures have decided me on accepting without further delay.—Rest assured I'll lose no time in making the acquaintance of your people."

"You dear! You darling! You've done me a world of good! Shall I ever be able to repay your kindness?"

.
They reached the entrance to Sir Richard's demesne, and a feeling of sadness came over Alice, as she and her friend drove through the broad avenue, lined with stately, sombre trees. When they drew up in front of the great oak door of the huge baronial pile that had been the home of her beloved father's youth, her heart was stirred to its depths, and her breast heaved with emotion.

The heat was intense, the place seemed deserted, not the least sound broke the noonday stillness.

Miss Bellgrove fastened the reins to a tree, and seeing the door ajar, entered softly, followed by Alice. They passed through the fine old hall, and ascended the grand staircase without meeting a soul.

Major Liston's portrait had been taken when he was a youth of nineteen; it was full-length, and represented him in uniform. There was no mistaking the proud, happy expression on the open, manly countenance. The brow was broad, the chin firm, the mouth as tender as the mouth of a beautiful child. The dark eyes, full of expression, imparted a startlingly life-like resemblance to the portrait.

Alice gazed and gazed as she stood riveted in the spot. Visions of that noble boy's early years rose in rapid succession

before her mental eye.—Her frame shook with sobs, as she realized how deeply his true and loving heart must have been wounded by the harshness of his father and the cold callousness of an only brother.

"It is time to go, dear," said Florence, very gently. "Dry your eyes, lest we meet some of the servants. I should have known, the sight of this portrait would have been too much for you."

They descended the stairs quickly, and had just reached the door when the housekeeper entered the hall.

"How do you do, Mrs. Ferrin?" said Florence, turning back.

"You see I've stolen a march on you; I've just taken our new governess to the picture gallery.—You are very well, I hope?"

"Very well, thank you, my dear young lady."

"You're as quiet here as if you were in a monastery."

"I fancy a monastery wouldn't be nearly so quiet, nor more out of the world," replied Mrs. Ferrin.

"Indeed, I think you're right. Have you heard from your niece lately?"

"I had a letter about ten days ago. Miss Bellgrove, you'll be surprised to hear that poor, dear Master Harry's family is living in the north of Ireland—in Craigbroney—the very place where my niece is at present.—I'd like to see his children."

"Were you fond of him?"

"Fond of him! Why, I helped to nurse him."

"I'm going to the north of Ireland, and on my return will give you news of his family. Good-bye—the pony is getting restive."

"Surely," said Florence, as she took her seat in the little phaeton, "there is a Providence that over-rules events."

Alice continued to cry, and by the time they got back, her eyes were so red and swollen, she begged Miss Bellgrove to apologise for her non-appearance at luncheon.

That evening, she dispatched a voluminous letter to her mother,—a letter in which Miss Bowmer came in for her share.

CHAPTER IV.

Every day increased the intimacy between Dr. Liston and the fashionably-dressed Australian. The lady had taken to visiting his poorest patients about the time he was making his professional rounds. On several occasions, he had the satisfaction of seeing her administer some much needed delicacy to a sick man or woman. Once he found her walking up and down a small, close room, softly hushing a sick baby that lay stretched across her arms.

It struck him, she must be a woman of generous impulse, one who was far from being insensible to the miseries of the poor.

Indeed, to hear Miss Bowmer talk was to conclude she pined to devote her life to works of mercy. The young doctor couldn't but feel pleased by her evident affection for his mother and her unvarying kindness to Gladys and Harry; then, she was always so becomingly dressed, and looked so well in her handsome clothes, it wasn't much wonder Philip took to a game of mental roulette in which Miss Bowmer always spun round to the winning point.

Of her really violent passion for Philip, not a word was said to McBride; but her cunning tactics suggested his being given a detailed account of her strategic measures. He laughed immoderately at the recital, now and again interpolating, with such complimentary expressions as: "You wily fox"—"you vixen, you're fated to succeed—", "you'll awaken the idiot's calf-love, ha-ha-ha!" This is enough to make a cat laugh!" "The lordly Liston! The king of men! as the beggars call him, to be caught by—" Had he finished the sentence his cousin would have been highly offended.

One lovely summer evening, our handsome young doctor happened to meet Miss Bowmer as she was taking her evening walk along a road on which she was pretty certain to see him. She wore a black picture hat, and a mauve dress. Philip thought he had never seen her look so well. He turned and walked with her! All things together, the reader won't be surprised to learn he proposed, and was accepted with as much gush as was proper to show on the king's highway.

Strange to say,—though the trees arched overhead, and there wasn't a soul in sight, Philip didn't seal the compact in the usual way.

When he told his mother, a cold chill seemed to contract her heart. It was too late to remonstrate, and she just said gently: "I hope, my son, this marriage will be for your good. There would be no use in debating on an act to which you have committed yourself, but you will forgive my saying, had you consulted me, I should have requested you to wait till we had a longer acquaintance with this lady."

A letter from Alice was received the very next morning, and the portion allotted to Miss Bowmer was extremely disconcerting to mother and son.

On parting from Dr. Liston, this lady had hastened to her cousin's residence, and danced about his sitting-room like a girl of eighteen, crying: "I've won! I've won! He has proposed! I may yet be Lady of Liston Hall!"

"You'd never have won had I not been at your back," exclaimed her amiable relative. "What's to be the next step in the dance?"

"I'll start in the morning for England, and stay for a while with Aunt Jane, to escape the risk of being interrogated as to my financial position, don'tcherknow?"

"You're about right there. No need to cheer till you're out of the wood!"

.
Some days later, Philip received an invitation to luncheon at the rectory. On entering the grounds he noticed a lady sitting under a tree not far off. She rose on seeing him, and, as she came forward smiling, he said inwardly,—*"What a lovely girl!"*

On her side, Florence Bellgrove thought,—*"What a distinguished looking man!"* Alice hadn't said one word about her brother's good looks.

"Dr. Liston, I'm sure."

"Miss Bellgrove, I presume." They shook hands.

"Your sister and myself have become excellent friends."

"Alice speaks in the warmest terms of your kindness.—She seems quite happy in your family."

"Our liking for each other was instantaneous.—Do you believe in instantaneous likings?"

"I do," he said, turning and looking at her, they were walking towards the house, "but I never thought of it before."

Miss Bellgrove was a tall, fair girl, with soft brown eyes, the reddest of lips, and a wealth of glossy, golden hair, coiled low at the back of her head. She wore a full, loose-fitting dress of cream serge, set off at the neck by a band of black velvet and a bunch of small, pink rose-buds.

Mrs. Hamilton, a comely, middle-aged woman, came down the avenue to meet her guests. "How do you do, Dr. Liston, I'm much pleased to make your acquaintance in this informal way. No need of an introduction to Miss Bellgrove, I see."

"No," replied Florence, "we have introduced ourselves. Indeed, I've heard so much of Dr. Liston, I can't regard him as a stranger."

"'Tis very kind of you to say so, but anyone who would take me at my sister's estimate would be greatly disappointed."

"I always accept a sister's estimate," said Florence, "who has so good a right to know?"

"Very hard to know any one; don't you think so, Dr. Liston?" queried his hostess.

"I think it well nigh impossible: we don't even know ourselves. Rochefoucauld has said: 'tis easier to know mankind in general than to know one man in particular."

"Do you think," said Florence, "if we knew ourselves thoroughly, we should know others well?"

"I think, we can't know ourselves, or others, thoroughly. 'Tis probable we all have inherent qualities that never come to light in our present state of existence, the circumstances that would reveal them don't arise."

"Exactly," said Mrs. Hamilton. "I knew a young fellow who was looked upon as a n'er-do well by his acquaintances; circumstances occurred that proved him a hero."

"That's why our friends so often take us by surprise," observed Florence. "We think we know them, when all at once they do something of which we hadn't supposed them capable."

There ensued a pause in the conversation, broken by Mrs.

Hamilton's remarking somewhat abruptly.—"Miss Bellgrove tell's me you're the nephew of Sir Richard Liston."

"I have no desire to claim relationship with that man," was the cold and rather haughty response. It suddenly occurred to Philip he was being patronised by these women on account of his relationship to this Baronet.

There was a momentary embarrassment. Mrs. Hamilton was struck dumb, till her visitor remarked, as he looked round.

"You have a pretty place here—that view of the sea through the trees is charming, and what magnificent chestnuts! Really, those are the finest specimens I've ever seen."

"Were you never here before, Doctor?"

"No, I only knew the late Rector in his professional capacity. We had no social intercourse whatever."

"Mrs. Rocheford was an invalid, and kept to the doctor she had long known," observed Mrs. Hamilton by way of explanation,

The Rector, a thin, keen-looking man, joined them, and the conversation took a wider range. Not until seated at luncheon was his fiancée's name mentioned, then, much to Philip's discomfort Miss Bellgrove said:

"Alice has been telling me of a Miss Bowmer, with whom you are acquainted, I think, Dr. Liston."

"Yes, she visits us."

"I didn't see her in church last Sunday," remarked Mrs. Hamilton.—"She dresses in the height of the fashion."

"Yes, she's very dressy. Her aunt is the housekeeper at Liston Hall. Miss Bowmer went to Australia when quite young, and returned about six months ago. She is said to be very wealthy, but her aunt laughs at the report."

Philip was on thorns; he wished he hadn't come.—Every word about Miss Bowmer was a dagger in his breast. His eyes were fast opening to the mistake he had made, and he was beginning to feel utterly miserable.—To cover his confusion, he addressed a remark to the Rector, who wasn't taking part in the subject of discussion.

"She's youngish, I think," said Mrs. Hamilton to Florence.

"I don't know her age—I know her style is juvenile."

"Oh, heavens!" thought Philip, "will they never have done?"

"Her complexion is so brilliant," said Mrs. Hamilton, "I could fancy it's casting a pink shade on the leaves of her prayer-book."

Florence laughed.—"You are drawing on your imagination, now, Kitty!"

"That's no new thing for her to do, Florence," interposed the Rector, good humouredly.

"I endowed you with many excellent qualities you don't possess, Frederick," said Mrs. Hamilton.

"Such as I am, you were glad to get me, my dear, don't you admit that?"

"I admit nothing of the sort, you Goth," laughed his wife.

Philip's face wouldn't relax; he felt put out and showed it. When the meal was over the Rector asked, would he come out with him or stay with the women.

"I'm not a ladies' man," he replied, "and think I had better keep close to you."

"You're very ungallant, Dr. Liston," said his hostess. "I've changed my mind as to calling you in when I'm sick."

Philip smiled, and walked out of the room with his host.

Mrs. Hamilton and Florence exchanged looks. "Liston appears put out," said the former.

"He hasn't recovered himself since the moment Miss Bower's name was mentioned," observed the younger lady.

"Oh, my stupid head! Why, quite lately, I heard he was to marry a wealthy woman, just home from Australia.—How unlucky!"

"In more senses than one," said Florence. "Surely that splendid fellow isn't about to throw himself away on an adventuress."

"Is she one?"

"His sister simply detests her."

"That doesn't prove she's detestable."

"In this case it does.—Alice Liston is a frank, warm-hearted girl, whose intuitions can be relied on."

"The woman must have money, or he believed she has."

Florence didn't reply; she had fallen into a reverie.

It wasn't long till Dr. Liston re-entered, to thank his hostess and say good-bye.

"Must you leave so soon?"

"I have a sick call that obliges me, Mrs. Hamilton."

"Do you think your mother would be able to receive us to-morrow?"

"I'm sure she would, I'll let her know of your coming."

"Thank you. May we see you to the gate, though you don't like ladies' society."

"You will do me a great honour."

Just at the moment of separation, Dr. McBride cycled past, and stared hard at the party.

"Hoity-toity," said he to himself. "This'll be news for Nancy. What a delicious morsel that young woman is!" That evening he wrote to his cousin.

.
When Miss Bowmer arrived in Liston Hall she threw herself into her aunt's arms, saying she had something very important to tell her, as soon as she would get a little rest and refreshment.

"Well, Nancy, what have you got to tell me?" inquired Mrs. Ferrin, when her niece had done ample justice to a good dinner.

"I'm going to be married!"

"'Tis time; you were forty-two last month."

"I look ten years younger, don't I?"

"Yes, when you're made up.—I hope the man's as old as yourself.—Who is he?"

"Dr. Liston!"

'Master Harry's son! Good lord! You don't mean it. You might be his mother! What sort of a gomara! is he?"

"He's the handsomest man I've ever seen."

"Then he must be an idiot!"

"Nothing of the sort; he's very clever."

"He must believe this ridiculous report of your wealth. You say the family's poor. If he marry you under the impression you're a rich woman, how will you hold up your head? You told me, when last here, the lady, whose maid you had been, left you at her death, five hundred pounds, her entire wardrobe, and a portion of her jewellery; that you had put three hundred in the bank, and decided on spending two. Is this true?"

"I told you exactly how I stood."

"I never took you to be such a fool, Nancy."

"Isn't the Baronet in bad health?—and isn't Dr. Liston next of kin?"

Mrs. Ferrin burst into derisive laughter.—"I see, I see, nothing short of a title will satisfy your ambition. Now, Nancy, I paid for the schooling that has enabled you, in some ways, to pass for a lady, and I've a claim on your giving me a hearing; put off this marriage, or you'll rue it."

"I thought you'd be glad."

"Rubbish!—Has Dr. Liston a sister?"

"He has two, one grown up, the other fifteen."

"Are both at home?"

"No, I couldn't find out where the elder has gone."

"I think I can tell you. Miss Bellgrove brought their new governess here to show her the portrait gallery; it struck me the girl was crying, and after they had gone it came to me in a flash that she is Master Harry's daughter."

This was startling intelligence.

"What is she like?"

"I couldn't tell; she took care I shouldn't get a glimpse of her face.—It was that made me suspicious.—Miss Bellgrove has gone to the north of Ireland, I fancy with the intention of finding out something about this family; so there'll be a nice kettle of fish to fry, when it comes out you're my niece."

Miss Bowmer was completely taken aback by her aunt's reception of her 'good news'; nevertheless, she hadn't the faintest idea of loosening her hold on Philip Liston. She didn't fear Miss Bellgrove's rivalry, on account of her engagement to Sir Richard; and Dr. McBride's intimation, when it came to hand—didn't disturb her as much as he thought it would; however, it decided her on returning sooner than she had at first intended.

CHAPTER V.

Philip's unhappiness was so evident, the Rector's wife spoke of him as "Our Knight of the sorrowful countenance." His love for an engaged girl and his increasing revulsion towards

the woman he had allowed to inveigle him into an offer of marriage, produced an indescribable turmoil of feeling. He looked worn and haggard. Like all fine natures, he shrank from inflicting pain, and the prospect of his next interview with Miss Bowmer made him feel sick at heart.

That lady's first visit on her return was to Dr. McBride. His salutation was: "It's all up the spout; he's clean gone on that beauty at the Rectory."

"She's engaged to his uncle."

"Love laughs at barriers."

"Are you an authority? Philip Liston won't easily slip through my fingers."

"What can you do?"

"If necessary, threaten to take my life, and lay the blame on him."

"The threat would make him uncomfortable; that's some satisfaction. He mayn't give you up, if he still believes you have all the money I averred you had.—Does old Aunt Jane know how you actually stand?"

"Unfortunately, I told her at the first go off; never dreaming of the turn things would take."

"There's a weak spot in your noddle, or you'd have kept your own counsel where she's concerned.—She's not pleased, I suppose, about this marriage."

"Pleased! She's as mad a hatter, but I kept cool, as I want to use her.—Good-bye till to-morrow."

Philip lost no time in obeying a summons to Miss Bowmer's lodgings, where he found her sitting on a couch, in an attitude that showed her slight figure and handsome dress to advantage.—It was her cue to appear offended. Without reaching her hand, she said coldly—"You didn't reply to my letter."

"No, I decided not to write; what I have to say is better said in person. Miss Bowmer, the offer of marriage I recently made you was rash in the extreme; that offer I feel compelled to withdraw, and I trust to your kindness to pardon the grave mistake I have made."

She sat erect, as if electrified, and a malevolent expression leapt into her small, black eyes.

"Pardon you for making a laughing stock of me? Pardon you for sporting with my tenderest feelings? I'll neither pardon nor release you! What can have changed you in so short a time? You gave me every reason to think you cared for me! You encouraged me in every way! Have you no sense of honour? Do you call yourself a man? Are you as whimsical as a chit of a girl? What explanation have you to offer for such shameful treatment?"

"I bitterly regret my error; indeed, I don't know what possessed me to act as I have done."

"Your regrets won't heal my wounded feelings."

"The temptation of the wealth you are said to possess led me on. A fellow who hasn't a penny but what he earns can't marry a woman without she has means of her own."

"Who says I have none? I have three thousand a year—I'll swear to it."

"I am truly grateful for your disinterestedness."

"Then prove your gratitude by keeping to your engagement; I'll take you on any terms."

"You are very good; but I must recede from the position in which I stand towards you."

"I shall not survive the disappointment, and I shall lay my death at your door."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say. I shall be found dead, and the blame will rest with you."

"Miss Bowmer, every word you say proves you have no regard for me, and that I'm having a fortunate escape in not making you my wife. If I thought you were serious, I'd have you placed under surveillance—you make me wish I had never known you."

Philip spoke with a degree of firmness he was far from feeling. Had a thunderbolt fallen at his feet, he couldn't have been more appalled than when this hitherto quiet, smiling woman declared her intention of committing suicide.

He didn't know how to act, the unexpected shock had, for the moment, benumbed his mental faculties.—He was young, not the least hardened, and was far from suspecting he had an accomplished trickster to deal with, a trickster whose

powers of deception had been highly developed by constant practice. He rose to leave.—This was the signal for a hysterical seizure, the lady burst into tears, wrung her hands, and screamed he 'was killing her', to the unspeakable consternation of the poor young man, who stood looking on in helpless bewilderment.

The noise brought the landlady, to inquire what was the matter.

"This lady has become hysterical," said Philip.

"That's plain to be seen," she replied, then, addressing her servant, who had followed—"Sarah, bring me a large jug of water."

"He's trying to kill me! He wants to kill me," screamed Miss Bowmer.

"There's no one going to kill you," vociferated Mrs Lackey, throwing the contents of the jug over her lodger, to the detriment of her own clean, white curtains and the paint on the lady's cheeks.

"It's wonderful, Doctor, the length some women go to secure a husband.—Please leave, and this lady will soon come round."

As the screaming had ceased, he too thought it would be best to withdraw. Mrs. Lackey accompanied him to the door and said:

"Rest assured, Dr. Liston, no person, while under my roof, will dare defame you."

He thanked her and left, thoroughly crestfallen.

Miss Bowmer, wet, mortified, and vindictive, undressed, went to bed, and sent for her cousin.

When that gentleman appeared on the scene, he was speedily accosted by Mrs. Lackey. "It's well you have come, Dr. McBride, we're after having an awful whillabaloo here, that relation of yours took to screeching, like a wild cat, tortured by bad boys. I suppose young Dr. Liston said he couldn't marry her."

"If he said that, he's a scoundrel."

"Easy, Doctor, don't let any one hear you say so. Dr. Liston's a thorough-paced gentleman; if you and Miss Bowmer take to trumping up stories about him, you'll rue it."

"Do you know to whom you speak?"

"Right well, I do. You made the balls and she fired them. If she has three thousand a year, as you circulated, what does she do with it?"

"You're an insolent shrew," and white with rage he entered Miss Bowmer's bedroom, saying: "What have you been doing to set that harridan on me?"

"What are you talking about? You know well I didn't set her on you."

"You'd better clear out! I'm accused of colluding with you."

"To think of his having gone the length of asking me to marry him, and then drawing back!"

"You were successful to a certain point, and would have been completely so, only for the hostile influence at work all along the line. What do you intend doing?"

"I'll leave this place to-morrow, take my passage to Australia, and, perhaps, come back some day to revenge the treatment to which I've been subjected."

.
On going home, Philip's heart gave a bound to find Miss Bellgrove sitting with his mother.—The atmosphere of the plain, little room seemed charged with kindness and love. No wonder his perturbed feelings grew calm in the presence of the two women held so dear.

"You're just in time, Dr. Liston, to escort me back. The Rector is from home, and Mrs. Hamilton begs you will take compassion on two lonely women and join them at dinner.—What do you say, Mrs. Liston?"

"Philip should be very pleased to accept the invitation."

"I much regret, it is out of my power to do so."

"Then, if you can't, you can't.—I must be off. Au revoir, Mrs. Liston, I won't say good-bey.—Perhaps, Doctor, it's not convenient for you to accompany me part of the way?"

"I'm not so pressed for time as all that, Miss Bellgrove," replied Philip with a grave smile.

They walked some distance in silence. Florence was the first to speak. "Dr. Liston, I sometimes notice a careworn expression on your face; forgive me for asking if you're in trouble?"

"Yes, I have been much worried of late—through my own fault."

"It might ease your mind to tell some one.—Will you confide in me?"

"I have been wishing for an opportunity to tell you everything. You are, perhaps, already aware my family is, in a great measure, dependent on me. Poor things! I don't like to think of the plight in which they would have found themselves when my generous grandfather died, had it not been for the help I've been able to give. A few months ago Miss Bowmer came to this place,—in some way or other an intimacy sprung up, and she became a regular visitor at our house. She seemed fond of my mother and showed an all round kindness to the family—Alice alone was recalcitrant.—Dr. McBride spoke to my brother of the lady's great wealth. Indeed, I never regarded her in the light of a prospective wife till Frank suggested its desirability.

On turning the matter over in my mind, I came face to face with the advantage of marrying a rich wife. Every man gets his chance, and most failures may be attributed to the chance not being recognised as such, or, if so, allowed to slip. It seemed mine had come.—I saw nothing in Miss Bowmer to repel me, and set her down as a generous, kindly woman.—I proposed—just a few days prior to my acquaintance with you. Next morning, she started for the south of England. I didn't see her again until to-day, and my interview has been of a highly disagreeable nature. When she found I was determined to withdraw my offer of marriage, she threatened to take her life."

"How very dreadful! I'm sincerely sorry for you."

"I was struck with horror. When I rose to leave, she became violently hysterical, and cried out I was killing her."

"Good gracious! You appall me."

"Her screams brought in the landlady, who took a very practical view of the case and speedily doused Miss Bowmer with cold water, while I stood absolutely powerless."

"If the woman really cared for you, I pity her disappointment; as to her wealth, I believe it to be a delusion and a snare."

"Wealth or no wealth, I never did anything I so much regret."

"Naturally. As to suicide, I don't think you have cause for apprehension."

"I sincerely hope Miss Bowmer has already come to her senses."

"I think your lines are hard—very hard—but your working for others will enlarge your heart, develop and strengthen every sterling quality you possess. You can never become self-centred, and your work and circumstances protect you from dangers to which rich young men are exposed.—May we hope to see you in Glenalpin Park?"

A pallor overspread Philip's face. "When we next meet, if ever, you will be married."

"No, emphatically no! My present engagement won't end in marriage."

He looked at her in surprise.—"You have changed."

"I have, and I haven't."

"It pleases you to be enigmatical."

"It does. You haven't said if you will come to see us."

"I should like to go, if—if you were free, and I were successful."

"I'll be free, Philip—" Her voice was low, very low, and a rosy blush suffused her cheeks.

His name on her lips thrilled his being.—He faced her, and his earnest, passionate gaze read the love-light in her eyes by the love-light in his own.

"You will come, now."

Before he could reply, she darted into the Rectory grounds and waved him off with a bright smile. No matter! a magic word, a look had in a moment translated him from purgatory to paradise.

When Sir Richard Liston returned in September, his friends were greatly shocked at the change in his appearance. He was worn to a shadow, and looked years older. Florence hadn't the heart to allude to the breaking off of her engagement; in all likelihood death would spare her the necessity.

He listened with evident interest to what he was told, concerning his brother's family, and one day requested Florence to wire for his nephew.

In due time, Philip arrived. He found his uncle stretched on a couch in his library. Sir Richard held the young man's

hand. "Philip—that I believe is your name—you will be a noble representative of your house. Go, now, and when you have dined, come back here."

Dr. Liston was deeply touched by the affectionate greeting of the housekeeper and the old butler, both of whom had known his father.

On his return to the library, the Baronet said—"I, couldn't expect you to entertain a friendly feeling towards me. It's a pity some of us don't experience in life the feelings we experience at the approach of the inevitable hour which awaits all alike. Death is a great teacher, it dissipates illusions and tears the mask from what we have prized.

Though your father was my only brother, we weren't brought up together—were never playmates—had different lessons—different schools and colleges. Until it was time to go to Eton, I lived with Lord Avon, my maternal grandfather, whose heir I should have been, had he not married a second wife, by whom he had sons of his own. I was in Africa, hunting big game, when I received intelligence of my brother's marriage. My father was a stern man, and I daresay his letters on that subject were unjust and misleading. However, I have no wish to excuse myself—I should have looked into the matter. My nature is neither warm nor expansive, I've been indifferent to most; but for any one I like,—I could die."

"My mother is a woman of whom any son might be proud, and my father was the best of men."

"So I'm told—too late—too late, words of sad import."

Philip felt more touched than he could have conceived possible. He gently inquired as to the nature of his uncle's illness and suggested a slight change of treatment, with the approval of the physicians in attendance.

In the struggle between life and disease, there were days when the victory seemed on the side of the former. These days were succeeded by greater prostration than ever.

Sir Richard entertained no hope of recovery, and soon suspected his nephew and his fiancée loved each other.—One day, taking Florence Bellgrove's hand, he placed it in that of Philip, with the words: "Philip, you will have all.—May all I can give atone for the past!"

THE MISTAKES OF A NIGHT AND AFTER

COMEDY AND TRAGEDY

THERE was an air of despondency in Dr. Denvir's attitude, as he sat alone in the dining-room of Beacon-View House—a detached villa on the east coast of Ireland. His elbow rested on the edge of the centre table, his head leaned wearily on his hand, and in the expression of his face there was a blending of sadness and gloom.—It was eleven, his household had retired for the night, and in the dead stillness that reigned, the ticking of a marble clock on the mantel-piece was so very distinctly audible, one might fancy a threat in its tone, as if indignant, people could be so oblivious of the ever-swift passage of time. The room was spacious, and furnished with highly polished mahogany; the walls a soothing shade of art-green; the frieze, woodwork, and drapery of three long windows, opening on to a terrace, were of snowy whiteness.

The Doctor was fifty, of middle height, with shoulders slightly rounded. A struggling, professional career, and the providing for a large family, had lined his face and made him prematurely bald.

The fire was quite out; still the solitary occupant of this handsome apartment brooded on, unconscious of a pair of eyes intently watching him.—At length, he heaved a long-drawn breath, looked at the clock, then, rising slowly from his chair, went to close the shutters.

As he turned to the middle window, his heart leapt to his mouth, for outside, clearly defined, in the zone of light, stood a tall, swarthy man—smiling and nodding familiarly!

“An escaped lunatic?” was the idea that first flashed through the Doctor's mind.

The stranger put his mouth to the glass and called in: “Do you not know me?”

“Good Lord! 'tis Jack O'Donovan,” exclaimed the Doctor, proceeding to open the window with all haste.

“Jack!”

“Tom!”

A warm hand-clasp.

"Come in! come! in A hundred-thousand welcomes!"

"You didn't know me?"

"Not from Adam.—You're bigger, broader, browner, and—you're 'bearded like the pard',—changed in every way—at least outwardly."

"A fellow has time to change in twenty years."

"Twenty years! Faith, a big slice out of a man's lifetime! Do you find me much altered?"

O'Donovan surveyed his friend.—Twenty years earlier, Dr. Denvir had been an alert, bright-eyed, dark-haired young man; during the intervening period, the sap, the vitality, had ebbed, and left him with a washed-out, limp appearance. He was but six years older than his friend, yet he looked twenty.

"I'd have passed you without the faintest recognition," said O'Donovan, slowly.

"Ah! I've lost my hair—nothing alters a man's looks more than baldness."

"I brought a lad along to show me the house. He looked in at the window and said, 'There's the Doctor, himself,' only for that, I'd have taken you for somebody else.—I stood observing you for some time,—you seemed in a brown study."

"Ra—ther.—I'll have something for you to eat in a minute."

"Not a thing,"—with a detaining hand on his host's arm.—"I've dined and supped,—couldn't touch a morsel."

"Something to drink then?"

"A bottle of soda,—if at hand."

"'Tis here—a dash of Dublin, old Whisky?"

"Well, just what you'd know."

"Abstemious as ever?"

"Much the same—never found the need of alcoholic stimulants."

"We didn't expect you till to-morrow."

"I didn't know this morning, I should be here to-night.—Got business that took me to A—, so thought that I'd come on. I missed the train and decided to foot it."

"Walked the whole way! Why you must be dead beat," said his host, handing the beverage specified.

O'Donovan drank thirstily, put down the tumbler and sank into a chair.

"What of your family, Tom?—How many children?"

"Nine girls and one boy."

"Whe—w! A heavy responsibility. Where does the boy come in?"

"About the middle.—Dick's eighteen."

"How is Mrs. Denvir?"

"I'm sorry to say she's suffering at present from a nervous breakdown.—Her illness has been increased by the hearing of several burglaries in this locality, in which some lives were lost.—She has locked up the silver, and lives in mortal terror of a nocturnal visit from the thieves."

"Have the police no clue?"

"Not the slightest.—Her brother, Frank, and my Dick, have been trying to allay her fears by shewing the gags, ropes, and other preparations they have in readiness, in case we are attacked.—You have never seen Frank O'Hanlon.—He's a young fellow of prodigious size and strength. We call him the "chucker," because at some political meeting, he "chucked" out the disturbers.—An average man, like myself, would be no more to him than a rat to a mastiff.—Stalwart as you are, Jack, he could run off with you."

"'Tis to be hoped I won't give him the chance," replied O'Donovan, smiling.

"You haven't married?"

"No—first ten years I'd no luck, second ten I'd no time."

"You've made your pile?"

"I've realised a competence."

"You'll settle down now.—Will you marry?"

"Perhaps."—He thought of a tall, fair girl, with lovely blue eyes, and rosy lips, he had met that very day, as he was coming out of a shop in A —. He and she had looked at each other interestedly, and she had occupied his thoughts all the way to his friend's residence.

"If you'll excuse me, Tom, I'll put on my slippers."

He opened a hand-bag, drew out a pair of red felt slippers, and while unlacing his boots, said, quietly: "Tom, if a thousand pounds would be of any use to you, it's at your service."

"Jack!"

"Well?"

"Are you serious?"

"Not likely I'd jest on a matter of that nature."

"Why, man, a thousand pounds would lift me out of my present difficulty,—would make me top-dog,—would be a hair-restorer of the best description," he added, smiling, though his eyes glistened.

"Say no more—you can have it to-morrow."

"Oh! Jack, you were always the heart of corn.—Always, when a little chap, ready to divide your apple and share your sweets with any beggar-boy that came your way. God be thanked! God be thanked! What a load of care you've lifted off my heart.—It's miraculous that such help should come to me in the very hour of my need."

"Tush, man! Why didn't you let me know you were hard up?"

"I did intend to venture on asking the loan of a couple of hundred."

"You had a poor opinion of me, after all."

"That I never had.—No! no! no, indeed! but when a man works hard for his money——"

"I say, Tom, what about bed?—I'm deuced tired."

"Come along then. Luckily your room is quite ready.—I won't extinguish the light here till I've consigned you to your quarters. It will be a great joke in the morning, to see you come down to breakfast.—Not a soul will know to-night that you are here."

They went softly into the hall—Several bedroom candles were in readiness on the hall-table. Dr. Denvir lit one, and then preceded his guest up a short, broad flight of stairs. There was a door on the first landing, the Doctor pointed to it, and then to himself, to indicate it was where he slept. To the right a longer flight led to the guest-chamber—a fine airy room in the front of the house. The Doctor went round it on a tour of inspection, to see if his guest had all he needed.—Everything was in perfect order.

"'Tis all right," he said, "I hope you'll sleep soundly.—Good night!—God bless you,—you've made me feel very happy!"

O'Donovan was soon in bed, and soon sound asleep.

He awoke about two o'clock, and was startled to see his room lit-up by a momentary flash of light, which he knew didn't proceed from the clouds. No.—Beacon View House was built within the radius of the revolving light, from which

it took its name; hence intermittent flashes illumined its front windows the night through.

O'Donovan had been born and brought up in an inland county; in any case, it so happened, his attention had never been drawn to revolving lights; they hadn't come within the range of his experience—extensive as that experience had been. The next flash convinced him that the robbers, of whom his friend had spoken, were at work on the premises. He got up, drew his coat over his pyjamas suit, put on his slippers, stole noiselessly out of the room and down the stairs into the hall. Wishing for greater certitude before raising an alarm, he stood listening in the dark.—Yes, there were stealthy footsteps—not far off either!—Just as he had decided to summon the doctor, he was seized, gagged, bound, lifted off his feet and flung into some place near at hand, with a strength and suddenness that deprived him of all power of resistance!—He heard a voice from the stairs ask whisperingly:—“Dick, what's wrong?” The reply was given in an undertone. “We've nabbed a burglar, and locked him in the stair-closet. Uncle is sending William on my bicycle for the police.—Come down and mount guard. If you hear the fellow making a noise, call me.”

“I won't stay alone.”

“Here's Nurse Biddy.”

“Masther Dick, darlin', what's wrong at all, at all? I'm all iv a shiver.—Is yir uncle tipsy?”

“Stuff! What put that in your head? Stand here with Jenny at the door of the stair-closet, and call for help if you hear the ruffian is trying to escape.”

Having thus delivered himself, in a voice little above a whisper, he went stealthily out of doors.—The capture had been purposely achieved with as much quietness as possible,—uncle and nephew thinking by that method to secure the rest of the gang.

In the stillness that ensued, O'Donovan could hear every word of a colloquy between Miss Jenny and Nurse Biddy.

“The ruffin in there's very quate.”

“He's gagged and bound.”

“Lord, help the mother that bore him.—It's tarrible entirely, whin children turn out a disgrace to all belongin' ti thim.”

“If we were to let him out, he might reform.”

"Are yi daft, Miss Jenny? Bad cess to the let-out we'll let him."

"I've read of a robber, who—taken red-handed—was allowed to go free, and he afterwards became a good man," replied Miss Jenny.

"Yi' read it in thim lyin' storybooks, in which there's not a word iv truth from beginnin' ti ind. Iv we wur ti free the ruffin in there, the first thing he'd do wud be ti murder us in coul' blood. His han's wud be rid enough thin." A short silence, broken by the nurse. "Miss Jenny, isn't the 'Stralian' gintleman comin' the day?"

"Yes, we expect him for luncheon."

"Is he married?"

"I don't know; but I know father thinks highly of him, and says he's one of the finest fellows ever breathed."

"Mebbe it's a wife he wants?"

"Very likely, if he hasn't got one."

"Wud ye marry him iv he's singel?"

"I'd marry him if he has money, and asked me, were he ugly as sin."

"Is that the way wid ye? I'd thought iv a nice young man come your road, ye'd take him, iv he hadn't a second coat ti his back."

"Then you take me for a fool.—I like good looks; but I love money."

"I've got the whip-hand of you, my lady," said the listener, to himself.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Miss Jenny, "that's my father's voice calling for help."

She rushed out of the house, regardless of danger.

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During this time, Mrs. Denvir, whose nervousness made her acutely sensitive to the slightest sound, had been raising an alarming commotion in her bedroom.—She shook her sleeping husband vigorously, crying in a smothered voice: "Tom! Tom! they're here; the robbers are in the house. Wake up, or we'll be murdered.—We'll be murdered,—do you hear?"

The poor woman slipped out of bed to lock the door; but to her dismay found the key missing. The next thing was

to light a candle, and to barricade the entrance with any furniture she could drag for the purpose. She tried the bedstead!—It was beyond her strength. Her husband, now fully awake, rose, put on his trousers, dressing-gown, slippers and an old soft hat with an elastic chinband, saying: "What had I better do, Maria?"

"Go out by the window, —I'll let you down with a sheet.— Send William for the police and raise the boys. Fly, fly, fly, for the Lord's sake, or we'll be murdered!"

"When I'm out, Maria, you'd better get under the bed."

As the room occupied a one-story annexe to the mainbuilding, descent was by no means impracticable.—A rope was made out of one of the sheets, and in less time than it takes to tell it, the Doctor had landed on solid earth. Mrs. Denvir, having closed the shutters, instead of getting under the bed, knelt down to pray for help in this, their awful emergency! Frank and his uncle occupied a bedroom on the ground-floor at the back of the villa.—Towards this room the Doctor cautiously directed his steps.—It was a mild night in the beginning of October, with just light enough to see the outline of objects.

Our friend had all but reached the window, when to his horror, he was seized and gagged—but not before uttering the cry for help his daughter heard.—His hands were tied behind his back, despite struggles that sent his slippers flying over the heads of his assailants.

"To the harness-room with him," said Frank, as he bore off his second victim, and into the harness-room the poor Doctor was ignominiously thrust.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Dick, as the door was bolted on his indignant father, "this night will immortalise us!" Visions of applauding friends rose before his mental gaze.

At this moment, the two doughty champions heard cries from the house that caused them to fly to the front.—There was a light in the hall. Nurse Biddy was wringing her hands and crying: "He's morderin' the masther an' misthress."

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Now it seldom happens that things done in a hurry are done well. The knot that bound O'Donovan's wrists was not tied with the intricacy of the Gordian knot of which we read

in our school-days; he was able, by the deft manipulation of his long fingers, to undo the rope.—The rest was easy.

“Open the door,” he called, “I’m O’Donovan, Dr. Denvir’s friend.”

“Yi are in me eye,” replied the old nurse, winking at an imaginary audience.—“Well, if ye wur O’Donovan a hundred-an’-fifty times, yi’ll stay where yi are till the polis come ti putt ye where yi out a bin years an’ years ago.”

Seeing it was useless to parley, the prisoner made a dash against the door.

“Almighty, save us!” cried Nurse Biddy, “he’ll be out.”

She ran, crying for help.—Mrs. Denvir, hearing her shrieks, joined in! O’Donovan wasn’t long in breaking open the closet-door,—lighting a candle, and bounding up-stairs to the assistance of his friends. Nurse Biddy, from outside the hall-door, saw him ascending, four steps at a time. He burst open the bedroom-door,—scattering the barricade in all directions.—Poor Mrs. Denvir, thinking her last hour was come, flung herself on her knees, and implored him for the love of God—for the sake of his mother, in memory of his innocent childhood, to spare her life.

The intruder, in his blue striped pyjamas and red felt slippers was not a figure to inspire confidence.

“Where is your husband, Mrs. Denvir,—I’m his friend?”

“Then if you be his friend, go and let me never see your face again!—We won’t prosecute.”

“I assure you, Mrs. Denvir, I’m——”

Frank O’Hanlon and two policemen were in the room!

Mrs. Denvir sprang to her feet, and pointing majestically to O’Donovan, cried:—“Sergeant, I give this scoundrel in charge.—Do your duty.—May he receive the punishment his crimes deserve.”

“My name is O’Donovan.—I’m a visitor here.”

“And a most unwelcome visitor you are,” replied the sergeant facetiously.

“Where is Dr. Denver?—He will prove my identity.”

“He went out by the window.—I let him down,” said Mrs. Denvir, addressing her brother.

“I’m a friend of his, who came last night,” said the supposed culprit.

“Look for the Doctor, and ask him to come here,” said the sergeant to his comrade.

To go back a little, Nurse Biddy's cries brought uncle and nephew to where she was standing, just as William, the coachman, with a sergeant and three of his men, arrived,—all on bicycles.

O'Hanlon, two policemen and Biddy rushed to the rescue of master and mistress. Dick, with the two remaining guardians of law and order, repaired to the harness-room to bring forth the other "robber."

When the light from a lantern fell on the Doctor, gagged and bound, his son was like to faint; but the policemen fairly choked with suppressed laughter.

On the gag being removed, Dr. Denvir's language was neither mild nor merciful.

Jenny, who, for an obvious reason, had been unable to find her father, now heard him denouncing idiots, numbskulls, and beetleheads in loud indignant tones.—She hastened in the direction of his voice, and was astonished to see him going towards the house, "under protection" as it were, with Dick slinking behind. The Doctor was still talking volubly, when the sergeant's emissary accosted him. "Doctor, we've handcuffed a man who calls himself O'Donovan, and says he's a friend of yours."

At this information the poor Doctor—struck dumb,—looked helplessly from one to another, as if imploring assistance to to express himself in adequate terms. However, when he reached his own room and saw O'Donovan actually handcuffed, he burst forth with:

"Now, Maria, you see the result of your ridiculous fancies. Here we have your brother and your son careering through the house like a pair of wild asses, gagging and binding everyone they come across. If you only hear a mouse nibbling, nothing will convince you that it is not a burglar going to cut your throat. For heaven's sake try and get some sense." Then to the sergeant: "Undo those handcuffs."

"Why, masther," exclaimed Nurse Biddy, who could no longer contain herself, "wan wud think ye wur angry, we hedn't rale rabbers ti dale with. It's on yir binded knees ye shud be, givin' thanks ti the Almighty we're all safe an' soun', an' not murdthered in our beds we are. We've a right ti be proud iv Mr. O'Hanlon an' Masther Dick; they've shewed what they cud do, an' what they wud do, an' after this night's work their names will be a tarror ti all the rabbers in the counthry."

"Hear! hear!" with a faint clap from Dick. Everybody smiled. Nurse Biddy invariably availed herself of the privilege accorded to an old servant, "in givin' people a bit iv her mine."

Jenny, who had remained outside, now advanced into the room.—To judge by the amused expression on her lovely face, it was the comic side of the situation that appealed most strongly to her imagination.

With a thrill of pleasure, O'Donovan saw in her the girl who had occupied his thoughts.—Yes, there she stood—"the lady of his dreams," and very charming she looked, in a long, blue morning wrapper, with her pale golden hair,—escaped from its fastenings and falling in massive coils below her waist. On encountering O'Donovan's gaze of frank admiration, she blushed scarlet, and fled.

"Jack," said the Doctor, "can you disentangle this concatenation of insane happenings?"

O'Donovan told what the reader already knows.

"I think, Mr. O'Hanlon," said the sergeant, "in future you should look before you leap. It's no joke to drag people out of their beds in the middle of the night, for nothing at all."

"Tom," observed Mrs. Denvir, "by not acquainting us with Mr. O'Donovan's arrival, you yourself are entirely to blame for the absurd series of blunders that have upset all present."

She advanced to Jack with outstretched hand. "Mr. O'Donovan, I'm very pleased to see you, and very sorry your first night should have been one of so extraordinary a character."

After the doctor had made some further remarks of a recriminatory nature the men adjourned to the dining room for refreshment.

Previous to their leaving, O'Donovan presented the sergeant with a sum of money, for distribution among his comrades, that mollified any anger the former felt at being called out, "for nothing at all."

The following morning, Mrs. Denvir, contrary to custom, presided at the breakfast-table. Her husband said jestingly, he hadn't seen her in so good form for a long time, and he supposed a few more nights like the past would restore her to perfect health.

Of nine daughters, only the two eldest were at home—three were governesses, one a hospital nurse, the three youngest were at a convent school in Dublin.—There was any amount of laughing and chaffing during the progress of the meal. Mrs. Denvir's pleadings for life provoked great merriment.—She was a pretty woman, of a delicate type, and strangers found her manner pleasing. Jenny was not present, her sister Alice said she had a headache. The second Miss Denvir was a pale, slight girl of middle height, with clear-cut features, small, bright, black eyes—set too close—and dark hair. She was clever, lively and musical, but by no means as intellectual as her beautiful elder sister.

O'Donovan's luggage came in the forenoon.—He himself, had gone to A—to visit a barber, from which visit he returned clean-shaven, with the exception of a moustache. He was in the prime of life, tall, perfectly proportioned, had an aquiline type of face, thick, crisp hair and an agreeable manner, altogether an attractive personality. Unfortunately, Alice Denvir thought him very much so, and she was glad her sister Jenny seemed disposed to remain in the background. Not but the latter felt O'Donovan's attractiveness quite as much as Alice; however, as he must have overheard what she said there could be no hope of his caring for her, and any attempt to win him would be set down to mercenary motives.—She decided to keep out of his way, and when in his presence, to assume a coldness of manner she was far from feeling. This being so, Alice had a fair field for the display of her attractions. But love is perverse, O'Donovan couldn't believe that Jenny was mercenary, he believed Nurse Biddy understood her better than she understood herself.—Alice didn't touch his heart, though he thought her a nice, companionable girl, with whom, however, it was necessary to be guarded.—Though not the least vain, he was too astute to be blind to the impression he had most unwittingly made, an impression by which he was more pained than pleased.

Dick returned to Clongowes.

Every day, while the Doctor went his professional round, Frank and O'Donovan were out with dog and gun, or on long walks inland. In the evening, the Denvirs assembled in the drawing room for the occupations and amusements usual in refined families.

A fortnight passed, without affording O'Donovan a single opportunity of a tête-à-tête with the girl he loved more and more deeply. She was always out marketing, or engaged on some household matter.—As another's manner is an echo of our own, Jenny's coldness produced a corresponding degree of coldness of manner in O'Donovan. He couldn't be at ease with her, as he was with her sister.—Sometimes he fancied she disliked him—that he repelled her. At other times, he thought she was by no means indifferent to him; so like all lovers he experienced the fluctuations of hope and fears. Jenny and the rest of her family believed he was strongly drawn to Alice—an opinion entertained by that young lady herself,—producing a state of things that shaped for unpleasant developments.

One day, O'Donovan, chancing to come across Nurse Biddy at the avenue gate, said, "Well, Nurse, I don't think Miss Jenny was serious when she told you she was so fond of money."

"There's no wan livin' hes her heart less set on it, exceptin' mebbe ti give it ti others."

"I sometimes fear she dislikes people she thinks rich."

"Masther O'Donovan," said the old woman, fixing her keen eyes on his face, "Miss Jenny'll never throw her head at any man.—Iv ye don't go afther her, she'il nivir go afther you.—Why don't ye up an' spake ti her; yi've hard the oul sayin', 'faint heart nivir won fair lady.'"

"Why, Biddy, you're a veritable eye-opener.—I see, I see—" To himself, "Well, I'll try and screw up courage."

At this moment, Alice came down the avenue, very smartly dressed, and said: "Mr O'Donovan, I'm going for a walk, if you have nothing better to do, you might accompany me."

He couldn't refuse, she had been so friendly since his arrival; but he was so preoccupied during the walk, his companion thought Nurse Biddy must have said something that annoyed him. That Sybil had certainly given him food for thought, for he saw what a sorry wooer he was making.

On getting back, he said, "Miss Alice, if your father has returned from his professional calls, I wish to speak to him?"

"I'm sure he's back by this.—You will most likely find him in his study."

Yes, he was there.—“Tom,” said O'Donovan, abruptly entering, “will you accept me for a son-in-law?”

“My dear fellow, how can you ask? With all my heart.—Have you asked her?”

“Not yet,—I've loved her since my eyes first rested on her face.”

“Love at first sight! Ha, ha, ha! 'Tis said there's such a thing. Well, go and prosper. She's a nice girl,—indeed, they're both nice girls.”

O'Donovan, who had remained standing, withdrew.

Some time after Alice came to the study, looking flushed and eager. “Has Mr O'Donovan been here, father?”

“Yes,” replied the Doctor, with a twinkle in his eye. “He wished to know if I'd accept him for a son-in-law. Has he asked you yet?” he continued, smiling significantly.

He had no doubt but that his second daughter was his friend's choice.

“No, but I'll accept him;” she replied.—“He's just splendid.”

She hastened to tell Jenny that O'Donovan had asked their father for her hand in marriage.

“I congratulate you, Alice,” replied her sister, growing deadly pale.

“Yes, with your lips, but not with your heart,” was the mental comment of the deluded girl, as she hastened to acquaint her mother with the good news.

When it came to Nurse Biddy's turn to be told, she stared at Alice in speechless amazement. “Are yi sure there's no mistake. Miss Alice?”

“What a thing to say!—Surely you're not surprised?”

“There's no knowin' the right way iv inythn' in this worl.' Well, good luck ti yi!”

“So it's that snipe afther all,” she muttered when alone.

O'Donovan didn't go in search of Jenny, he preferred to await an opportune moment for asking her to become his wife.—No opportune moment occurred that day, Jenny having gone to visit a friend with whom she was to remain for the night.

When Mrs. Denvir visited Alice's room at bed-time, she was much surprised to learn their guest hadn't proposed, as all expected he would have done.

Jenny returned in the forenoon of the following day, and

had just taken off her outdoor things, when Nurse Biddy came to say Mr. O'Donovan wished to see her in the garden for a few minutes, would she kindly go out to him.

Miss Denvir, supposing the desired interview had reference to the new relationship he was about to contract, went out immediately. O'Donovan was walking up and down a side path, feeling very nervous.—Jenny came forward, lovely and graceful.—She held out her hand.

"Mr. O'Donovan, you wish to tell me you are to become my brother-in-law."

"Your brother-in-law? What can you mean, Miss Denvir—Jenny? Darling! 'tis yourself I want.—I love you truly.—Say you'll take me for your husband."

"Mr. O'Donovan, there is some cruel mistake; Alice, herself, and every one else, think 'tis her you have chosen.—Did you not ask father for her hand?"

"By no means.—I never for a single moment looked on your sister in that light.—I asked your father, would he accept me for a son-in-law, but mentioned no name. 'Tis you I love, Jenny, will you be my wife?"

She stood before him with blushing cheeks and downcast eyes.

"This mistake—"

"Don't mind the mistake.—I'll soon rectify it.—Could you care enough for me to be my wife?"

"I love you.—But go at once to my father and set matters right."

"This instant, darling!" as he raised her hand to his lips.

The Doctor was in his consulting room with a patient, so the lover had to wait.

Jenny's happiness was far from being unalloyed. She had an undefinable dread of the consequence, when Alice learned the truth.

O'Donovan joined the Doctor, as soon as he knew the patient had left. "Tom," he began, "'tis Jenny, your eldest girl, I love. I've asked her to marry me."

"Heavens above! Jack, I thought it was Alice.—I've most fearfully blundered."

"Well, correct the mistake, old man! I'm sorry, but it can't be helped."

"We all thought it was Alice.—She thinks so herself."

"I can't help people's thoughts I'm sure there's no one

here who would so far misinterpret my friendly attentions as to say I trifled with your daughter,”

“I’m sure you would do nothing of the kind.—Have you spoken to Jenny?”

“Yes, I’ll get her consent when this confounded mistake is corrected.—She admits caring for me.”

“I’ll undeceive Alice.”

“She shouldn’t need to be undeceived.—I’ve never, by word or look, given her reason to suppose I was thinking of her in a matrimonial light. Surely you didn’t say it was to her I wished to propose?”

“I fear I implied as much.—I wish you had been more explicit, or that I had asked which of the girls you had chosen.—I understood; but—’Tis Newman who warns people against the danger of ‘understandings.’”

“People jump to conclusions without any data at all.”

Mr. O’Donovan, feeling much annoyed, said:—“Pray, Tom, set matters right at once.”—With these words, he left the room and Dr. Denvir immediately summoned his wife and daughters to a family council.

The effect on Alice, when made acquainted with the real state of the case, was baleful, and roused every bad feeling in a nature not richly endowed with fine moral qualities.

“I supposed it to be Alice,” concluded the Doctor.

“Very naturally,” observed that young lady, “he paid me great attention.”

“Only friendly attention,” observed her father.

“Of that I’m the best judge!”

The insinuation was obvious.

“Mr. O’Donovan’s behaviour has been misleading,” said Mrs. Denvir, “he was cold to Jenny and the reverse to Alice.”

“Father, are you going to allow him to marry Jenny, after the way he has trifled with me?” demanded Alice, fully conscious of speaking falsely,

“He didn’t trifle with you, Alice,” said her sister, “you set yourself to win him from the first, and I didn’t put myself in the way.”

“You kept in the background, but played the game all the time.”

“There must be no recrimination,” said the Doctor, “’tis

most unseemly. The fault is mine, Alice, and I ask you to pardon my misleading you."

"The fault is O'Donovan's, and my position is most humiliating. I've told several of my friends he had asked you for my hand."

"Then your vanity is responsible for your humiliation—I'm about to summon O'Donovan."

"I'll leave," said Alice, rising. She went to her sister and hissed into her ear, "*I hate you, I hate you with all my heart.*"

O'Donovan was soon on the spot. "Come here, Jenny," said her father. He placed her hand in that of his friend and said—"Jack, in this girl you get a treasure.—Jenny, you are a very lucky girl."

"You see, Mr. O'Donovan," said Mrs. Denvir, smiling, "I wasn't wrong in regarding you as a thief."

.....
It was arranged the wedding should take place in a month from the engagement, and preparations began forthwith.—As to Alice, pride enabled her to conceal her bad feeling when in the presence of O'Donovan, for whom her infatuation, strange to say, kept pace with her new-born hatred of Jenny. The demon of envy entered her soul and turned the milk of her nature to gall.—She wished her sister would die, and the black wish grew blacker the longer it was harboured, till it assumed a determination to compass what it desired. The means were at hand. In a closet off her father's consulting-room, were bottles of which she knew the contents to be deadly.—Dr. Denvir having casually explained their properties and uses.—These bottles had now a sort of fascination for her; she would slip into the closet, handle them, smell them, replace them, with a shiver of the flesh,—the temptation, though growing, had not, so far, wholly conquered.

There was one person who studied Alice Denvir's moods and looks with apprehension—her father. He knew human nature well, and he knew of dark deeds, that had never seen the light of day.—He began to feel that some malign influence was at work beneath his roof; a gnawing anxiety of mind took possession of him, his rest became disturbed. To suspect his second daughter of any criminal intention was abhorrent to him, yet the hideous suspicion refused to be banished. Instinctively he examined the window of his medicine closet,

too see that ingress that way was not feasible. He then locked the door, and put the key in his pocket—a departure from his usual practice. He felt as if obeying some inward monitor in thus acting. He talked kindly to Alice—tried to draw her out of herself—projected a trip to London when the wedding would be over, etc. She listened with set, white lips, but said nothing.—Her manner and bearing was poisoning the atmosphere of her home, and falling like a blight on the happiness of her sister.

One night, about a week prior to the wedding, Dr. Denvir, feeling unable to sleep, got up, dressed partially, and stole down to have a look at this small room, the thought of which had become like a nightmare on his brain.

Yes! *There was a light in the closet!* She must have stolen the key!—The man's heart stood still.—When able to move, he drew close to the door, and waited!—It was a cold night, but he felt no chill, except the chill at his heart—it seemed caught as if in a vice. Would she never come forth? Would she never have done? He must have proof positive of her dark design, in order to bring home her guilt and induce her to repent.

At last, unable to longer endure the awful suspense, he turned the handle of the door.—The candle had burned low in its socket. He saw no one! Yes, there was a figure stretched on the floor!—He stooped and looked.—*It was Alice!*—He touched her!—She was dead!

Heart failure was the Coroner's verdict!

THE END.

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~~MAR 26~~

~~MAR 20 1929~~

~~MAR 12 '48~~

~~MAR 12 1948~~

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